AFTER THE BATTLE

CARINHALL REVISITED

BATTLE OF THE HÜRTGEN FOREST

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Front Cover: Carinhall — Hermann Göring's retreat in former East German territory — was not only his private mansion but a shrine to his first wife Carin. Here with Hitler he emerges from her underground tomb (see back cover for comparison).

Centre Pages: *Left:* The Kall Trail, still much the same now as in 1944 when the US 28th Division used it in their abortive attempt to capture Schmidt — one of the costliest actions of the Second World War. *Right:* Relics of the battle of Hürtgenwald.

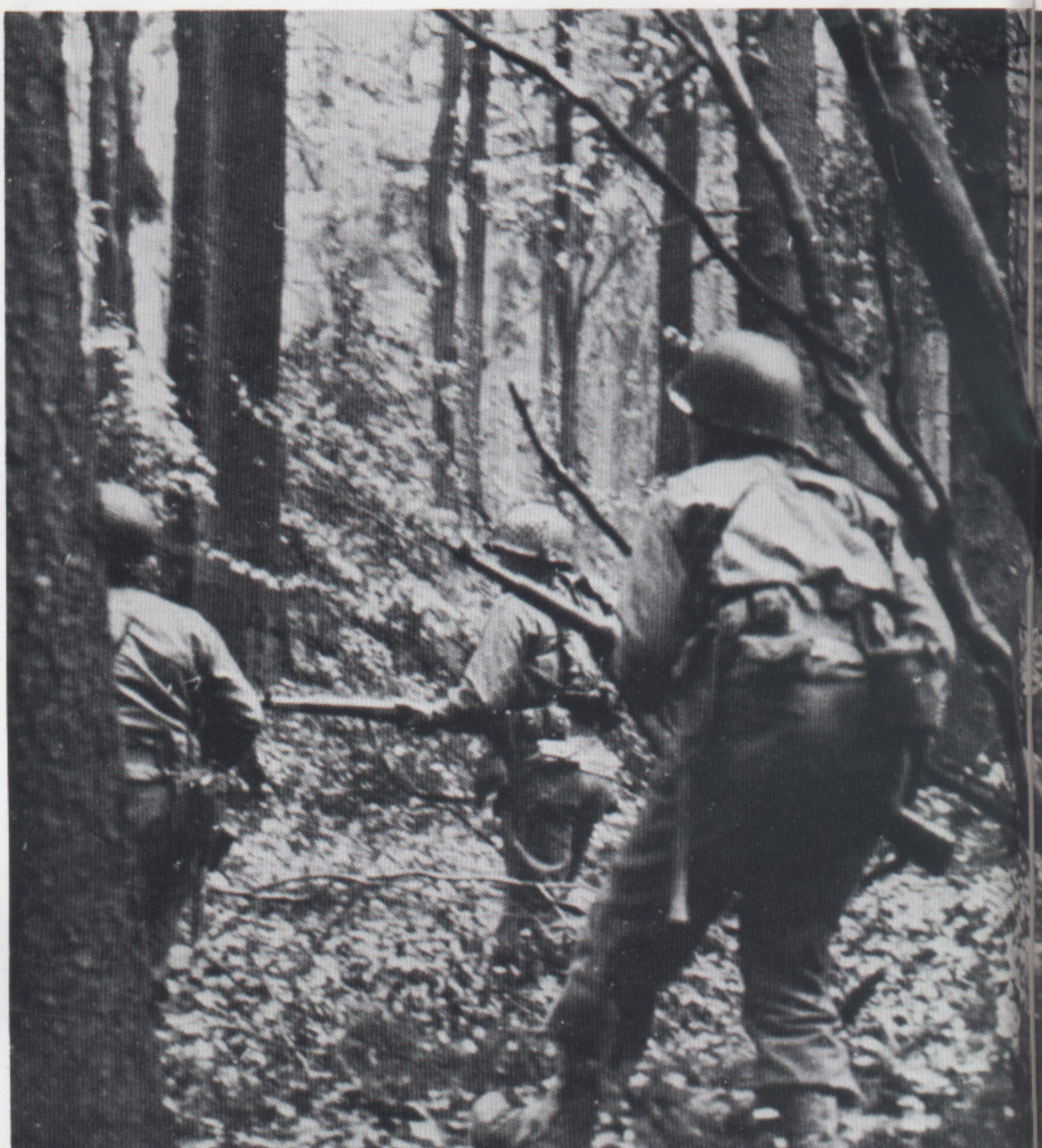
Back Cover: Her former resting place demolished *(top)*, Carin Göring now at last at peace having been returned to her family plot in Lovö Cemetery in Sweden.

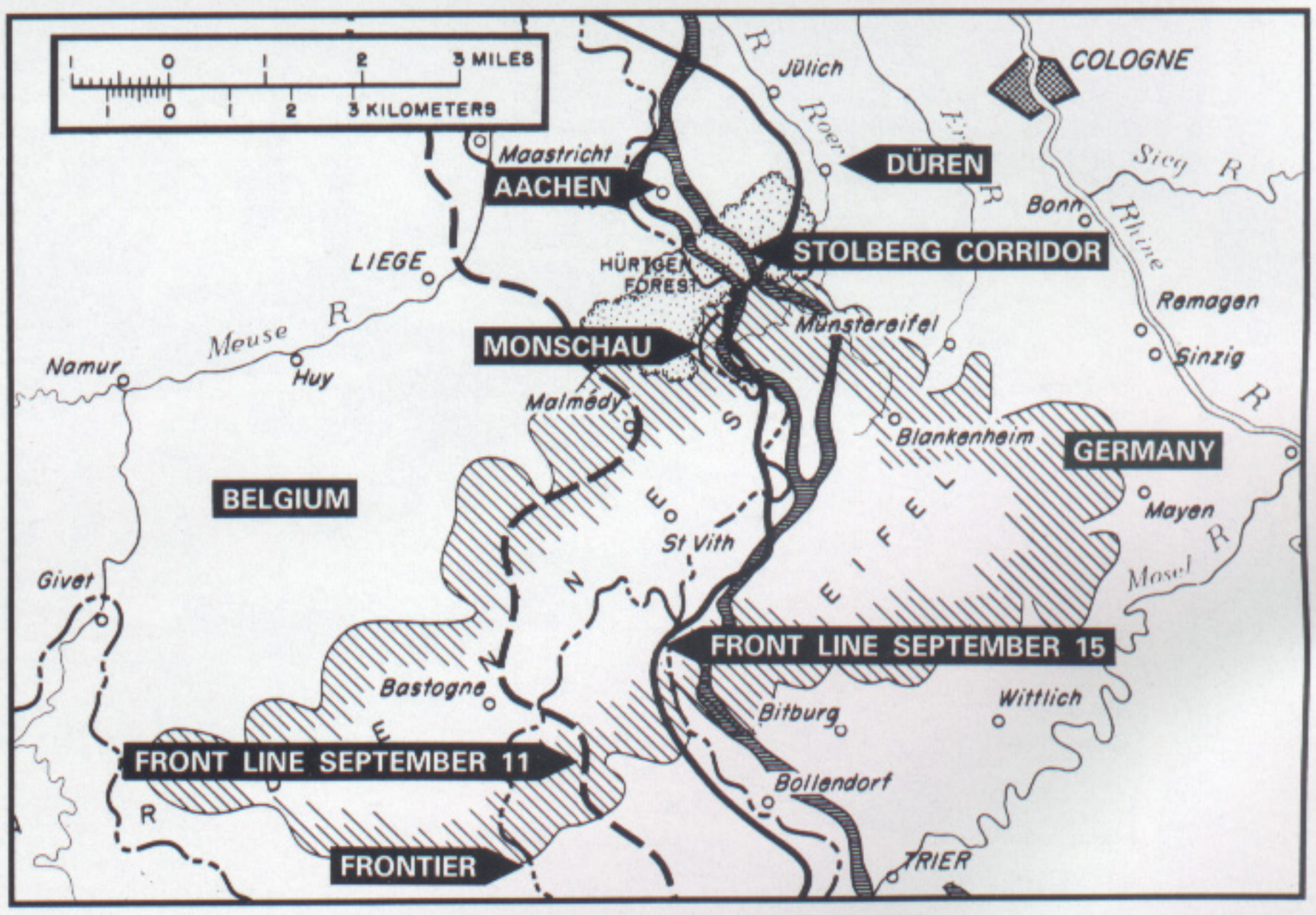
Dedication: Courtney West would like to dedicate his story on Carinhall to Caja, Carin Goring's great-niece.

Photo Credits: IWM — Imperial War Museum

COMPETITION

Winners of our Winston Churchill caption competition (issue No. 70): Robert Chapman of Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk; John Cook, Nottingham; and Michael Hill of Bournemouth.

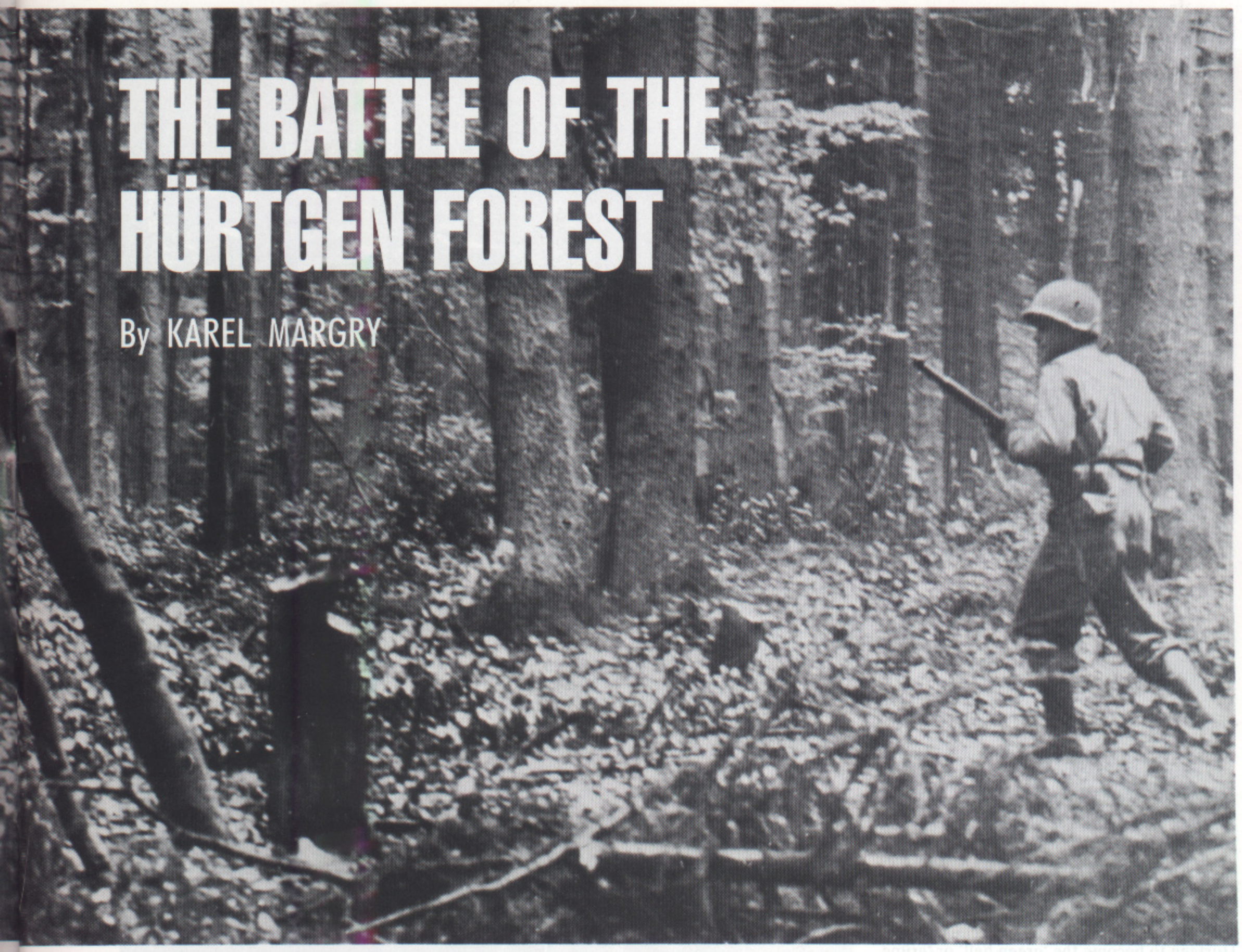




On September 10 the first Allied patrol to cross the German frontier did so just south of Aachen (see *After the Battle* No. 42). At that time the front line (dotted) lay in front of the Siegfried Line — Germany's West Wall. Astride the Line south of the city lay a deep belt of forest — the Hürtgenwald — through which the Americans launched their attack on September 13. The bloody battle lasted three months, sucking in more and more men from both sides. By December 15, just as the major part of the Hürtgen Forest had been cleared (solid line), Hitler launched his counter-blow through the Ardennes, halting any further American advance for a month.

THE BATTLE OF THE HÜRTGEN FOREST

By KAREL MARGRY



'If anybody says he knew where he was in the forest, he's a liar', said a battalion commander. 'Under a dense curtain of rain-heavy fir branches, across a spongy cushion of wet brown droppings from the firs, a man moved cautiously from one tree trunk to another. Each step might be his last. Even if the spewings of the burp gun that might erupt at any moment from deep within the trees happened to miss you, it caught the man beside you, or the man six paces to the right or eight paces to the left. Next time you might be the one.' Charles B. MacDonald: *The Battle of the Huertgen Forest*. (US Army)

Stretching north-east from the Belgian-German border, the Hürtgen Forest covers an area of about fifty square miles within the triangle formed by the towns of Aachen, Monschau and Düren. Technically, it embraces three forests, the Roetgen, Wenau and Hürtgen Forests, but it was the name Hürtgen that caught on with both the American and German soldiers who fought there. As the northernmost part of the mountainous Eifel region, it is, broadly speaking, one big wooded plateau, sliced into ridges by numerous streams. At its eastern end, this plateau drops down sharply to what is called the Roer plain, the flatlands of the Roer river opposite Düren. (The Roer, or Rur, is not to be confused with the Ruhr river east of the Rhine.)

Right through the heart of the forest, two creeks, the Weisser Weh and the Roter Weh, flow northwards to join in the Wehe river, which then continues north-eastwards to the Roer. Further south, another subsidiary of the Roer, the Kall river, cuts its way through a deep gorge. Of the ridges created by these watercourses, the three main ones lie side by side and run in a north-easterly direction. Most villages lie on top of these bald ridges and the few roads through the area either follow the spines of the ridges or the valleys below. In the north is the Hamich ridge, running from the village of Schevenhütte to Langerwehe and with Hamich village on top. In the centre, separated from the Hamich ridge by the Wehe river, lies the Germeter-Hürtgen-Kleinhau ridge, enclosed on all sides by impenetrable woods. From this ridge, two smaller spurs stick out southwards: the first from Germeter to Vossenack, the second from Kleinhau to Brandenberg and Bergstein. In the south, across the Kall river from Vossenack, lies the broad Lammersdorf-Schmidt ridge. All of these rivers, ridges and villages were to play a prominent role in the coming battle.

For a drive on the Roer from the west, only two natural avenues for attack exist, one outside the forest, the other skirting it. In the north, between the city of Aachen and the forest plateau, runs the so-called Stolberg Corridor, a narrow strip of land named after the industrial town which lies in its centre. In the south, the flat, open Lammersdorf-Schmidt ridge offers a semblance of a route from Monschau to Düren and could thus be called the Monschau Corridor. In between lies the Hürtgen. Here, there are no good east-west roads. The only highway through the forest runs north-east, from Lammersdorf, through the ridge-top villages of Germeter, Hürtgen, Kleinhau and Gey, to the Roer plain and Düren.

If the best routes to the Roer ran north and south of the forest and not through it, why then did the Americans not only try to push straight through the forest, but persisted in doing so for three months? The reason was a purely negative one: to deny the forest to the enemy as a base from which he could counter-attack the Allied drive on the Roer and Rhine. Apart from that, the US planners could see little else to gain from the forest — no war industry, no important road net.

However, in doing so, they overlooked the one vitally important objective which the forest shielded: the seven reservoir dams which together regulated the water level of the Roer river. The two principal ones were the Schwammenauel Dam and the Urft Dam, both lying south-east of Schmidt. If the Germans blew these dams, the resulting flood wave would sweep away bridges and wipe out any force trying to cross the river downstream. Yet, for a long time, the Americans planned their attacks without taking the dams into account. It was not until very late in the fighting, around mid-November, that their importance began to dawn on the Americans. As the official US Army historian said, the Roer Dams were 'the neglected objective' of the Hürtgen campaign.

Although pictures like these show the essence of the Hürtgen fighting, obviously they will have to go without a comparison shot. Even if one was able to locate the spot, the resulting comparison would only show a mass of fir trees and thus be pointless. We have therefore chosen to present the Hürtgenwald story through the many villages that dot the area and by focusing on one crucial episode, the drama of the 28th Division on the Kall trail. In the process, however, we have found that even a forest sometimes yields meaningful then-and-now images. (US Army)

FIGHTING IN THE FOREST

The Hürtgen Forest produced its own special, grim way of fighting. War correspondent Ernest Hemingway called it 'Passchendaele with tree bursts'. Casualty rates were shockingly high and losses from non-battle causes — weather exposure and combat exhaustion — reached unprecedented levels. Although historians tend to describe the agony of the Hürtgen battle from the American point of view, it is important to realise that the hardships of the German soldier were as great as those of the GI, perhaps even greater. For most German units arrived in the forest already tired and beaten from earlier engagements and, for lack of replacements, they generally had to stay longer as well.

A combination of terrain, weather and the machinery of modern war caused the Hürtgen to become the 'green hell' or 'grüne Hölle' which the ordinary soldiers feared and hated so much. Anyone who entered the vast, dark mass of evergreens immediately felt its depressing, claustrophobic effect. The closely-packed fir trees rise seventy-five to one hundred feet above the damp rugged floor of the forest, allowing little light to filter through. Often, the bodies of the firs began so close to the ground that there was only room for a man crawling on hands and knees. Orientation within the forest was very difficult. Sometimes it was helped by cement survey markers which stood at intersections of firebreaks and were marked on the map; most of the time, orientation and movement had to be done from compass reading. Not surprisingly, many units lost their way in the woods. Observation was mostly limited to a few yards; adjusting artillery fire by sight was utterly impossible. Movement was severely curtailed: trails and firebreaks were almost invariably blocked by felled trees and infested with anti-personel and anti-tank mines, often fitted with anti-lifting devices. Booby traps were everywhere.

The weather was, perhaps, the soldier's greatest enemy. The autumn of 1944 produced weather of near-record severity. It rained for days on end. Mist and freezing cold made life in the forest miserable. As the autumn progressed, rain turned into sleet, then into snow. The elements played hell with man and machine alike. Infantry stood guard in muddy foxholes and slept in trenches filled with water. Overcoats soaked with moisture and freezing with mud became too heavy to wear. Thousands of men fell

victim to trench foot, frost bite or respiratory diseases. Passage of just a few vehicles could transform a firebreak into a sea of mud. Seeping rain turned radios into useless impedimenta. Dirt caused weapons to malfunction.

Because of weather, terrain and the enemy, the Americans were unable to make full use of their superiority in air power and armour. Fighter-bombers were mostly grounded by bad weather; tanks could not get forward, bogged down on muddy tracks or hit mines.

During the battle, the Americans and, despite dwindling supplies, the Germans too fired inordinate numbers of shells into the forest. Artillery fire was all the more deadly because of tree bursts. If caught out of a dugout, a man's best chance to survive the hail of shell fragments was not to fall flat, but to stand up close to the base of a tree.

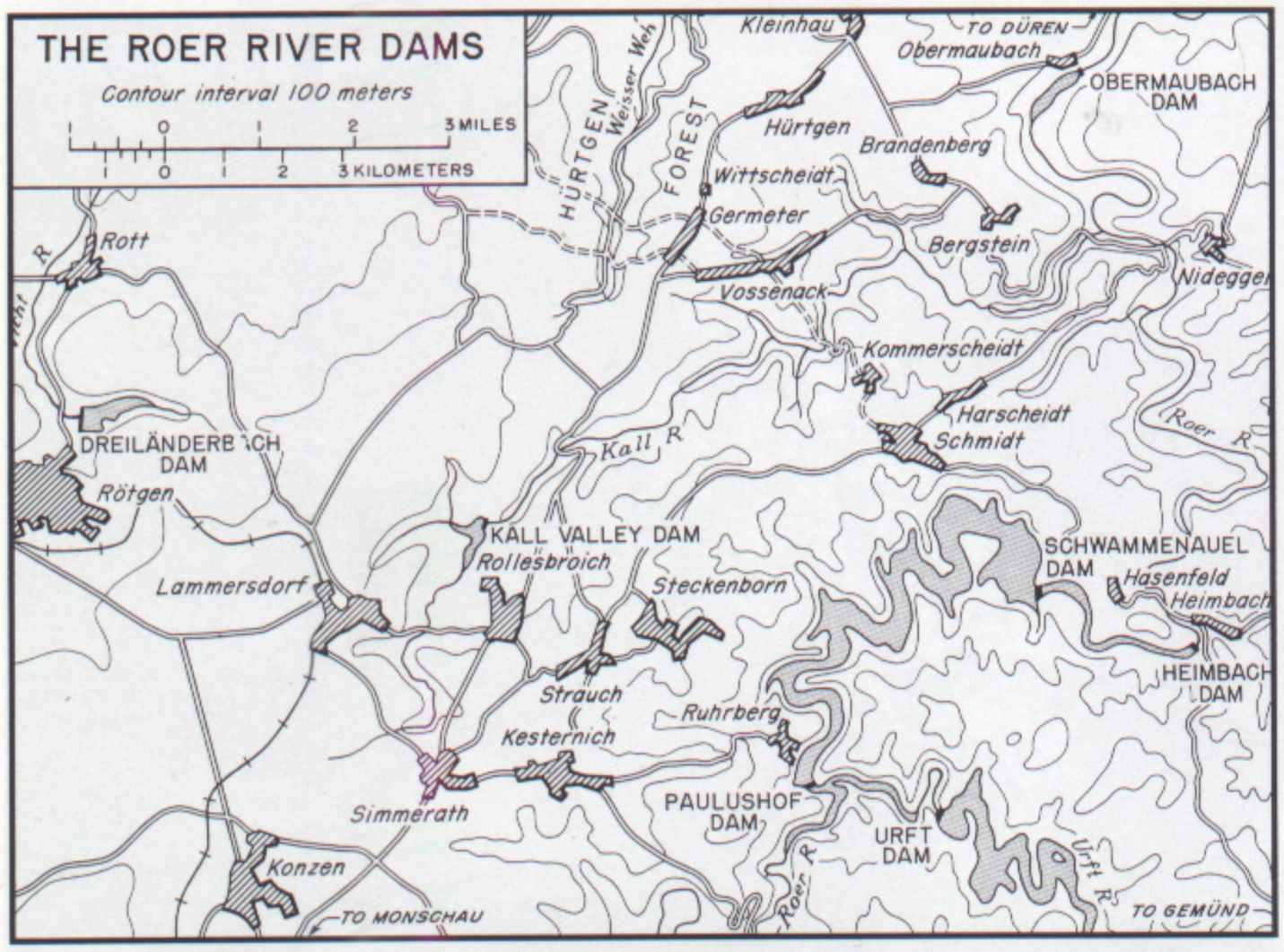
Seeking shelter from the weather and the shelling, troops covered their foxholes with tree stumps and buttoned up. As it was too dangerous to go back to collect bedrolls, many slept without blankets. All too often, hot food did not reach them. A few days in the dismal forest left men tired, dirty, unshaven and nervous.

Within the woods, contact with the enemy was mostly at close quarters. Hand grenades were often the decisive weapon and hand to hand fighting was not uncommon.

Even a few poorly-co-ordinated squads in well-prepared field fortifications might hold off a company or battalion at heavy cost to the attacker. The floor of the forest became so choked with debris that it became physically impossible to move supplies forward or evacuate the wounded. Often, after a setback, the dead had to be left behind on the battlefield, their swollen bodies lying about in grotesque positions. Units absorbed horrendous casualties and battalions were reduced to the size of companies. Many companies ended up with less than 25 men. Replacements, arriving in the line bug-eyed and frightened, were often not up to the deadly forest fighting and became casualties within hours of entering combat. Others might find themselves suddenly leading the survivors of a unit that had lost all its officers. The Hürtgen was especially rough on leaders.

Under these conditions, it is not surprising that morale suffered and that many found the psychological strain too much. On several occasions, companies, sometimes whole battalions, broke and stampeded to the rear in panic. Commanders were relieved of their command because they refused to carry out an attack or were unable to get their men to follow them. Men were put under arrest for failure to obey an order. Thousands of men had to be evacuated because of combat exhaustion.

Such was the misery and gloom of the Hürtgen Forest.



under a skeleton headquarters, this division had orders to defend the forest from below Schevenhütte all the way south to Lammersdorf.

In the south, General der Infanterie Erich Straube's LXXIV. Korps had one of its two divisions blocking the Monschau Corridor. This was the 89. Infanterie-Division (Generalmajor Walter Bruns). With only one organic regiment left, it had been hastily shored up with a grenadier training regiment, one Landesschützen and three Luftwaffe fortress battalions. Its artillery counted only eight howitzers.

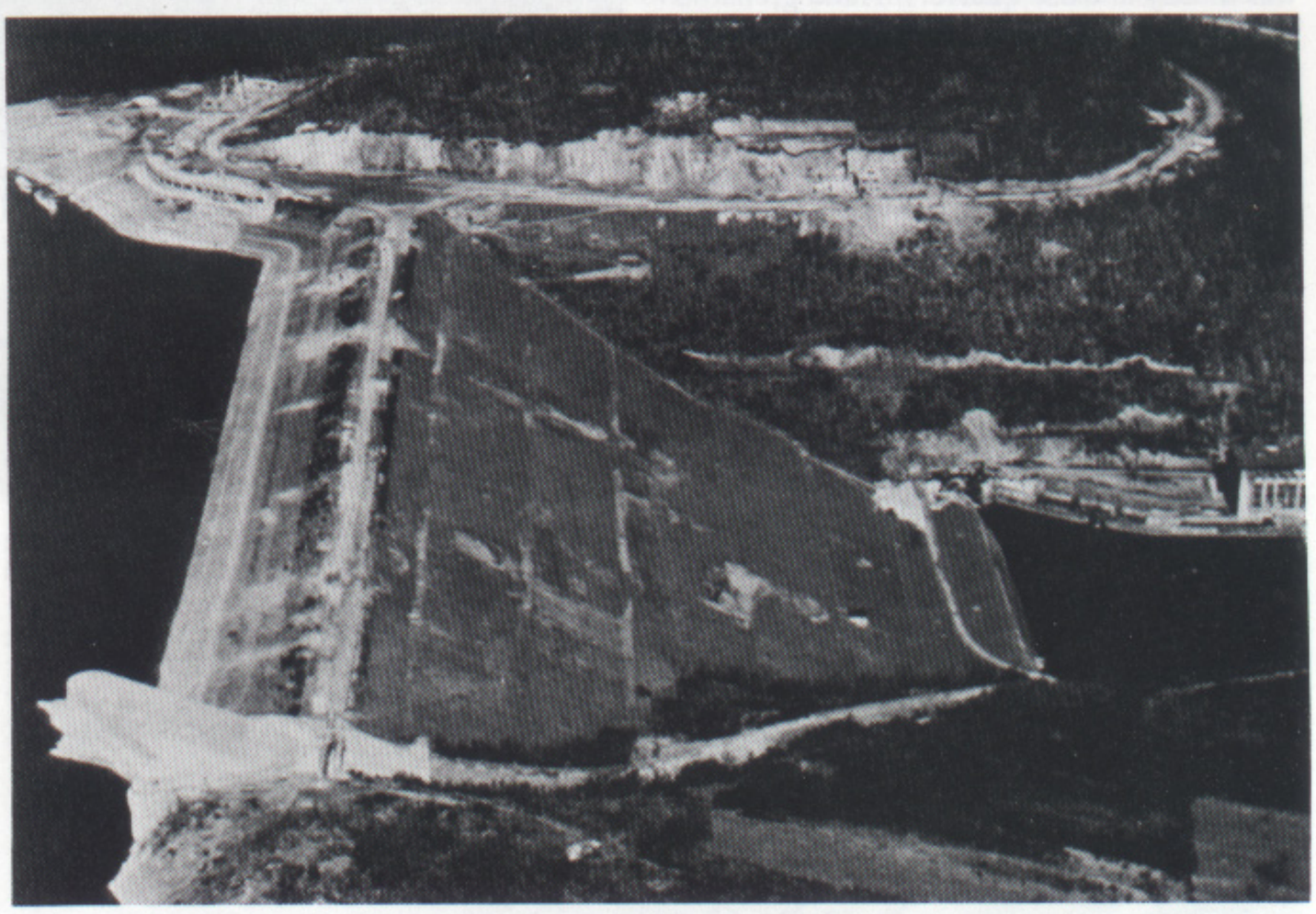
The Germans stubbornly defended the forest for four reasons. Firstly, the difficulties of its terrain made it ideal for defence by a small but resolute force; secondly, its position along the Belgian-German border offered an opportunity to block further enemy advance into Heimat territory; thirdly, unlike the Allies, the German High Command was acutely aware of the importance of the Roer Dams and holding on to them played a predominant role in their thinking; and fourthly, delaying the enemy west of the Roer was essential for gaining the time needed for the massive build-up behind that river for the great Ardennes counter-offensive which was planned for December.

The German High Command was well aware that the most important strategic objective in the forest area was the series of seven dams near the headwaters of the Roer river. However, to put their size into perspective, the largest dam, the Schwammenauel, had a capacity of less than half of the more famous Eder Dam in the Ruhr which had been breached by the RAF in May 1943.

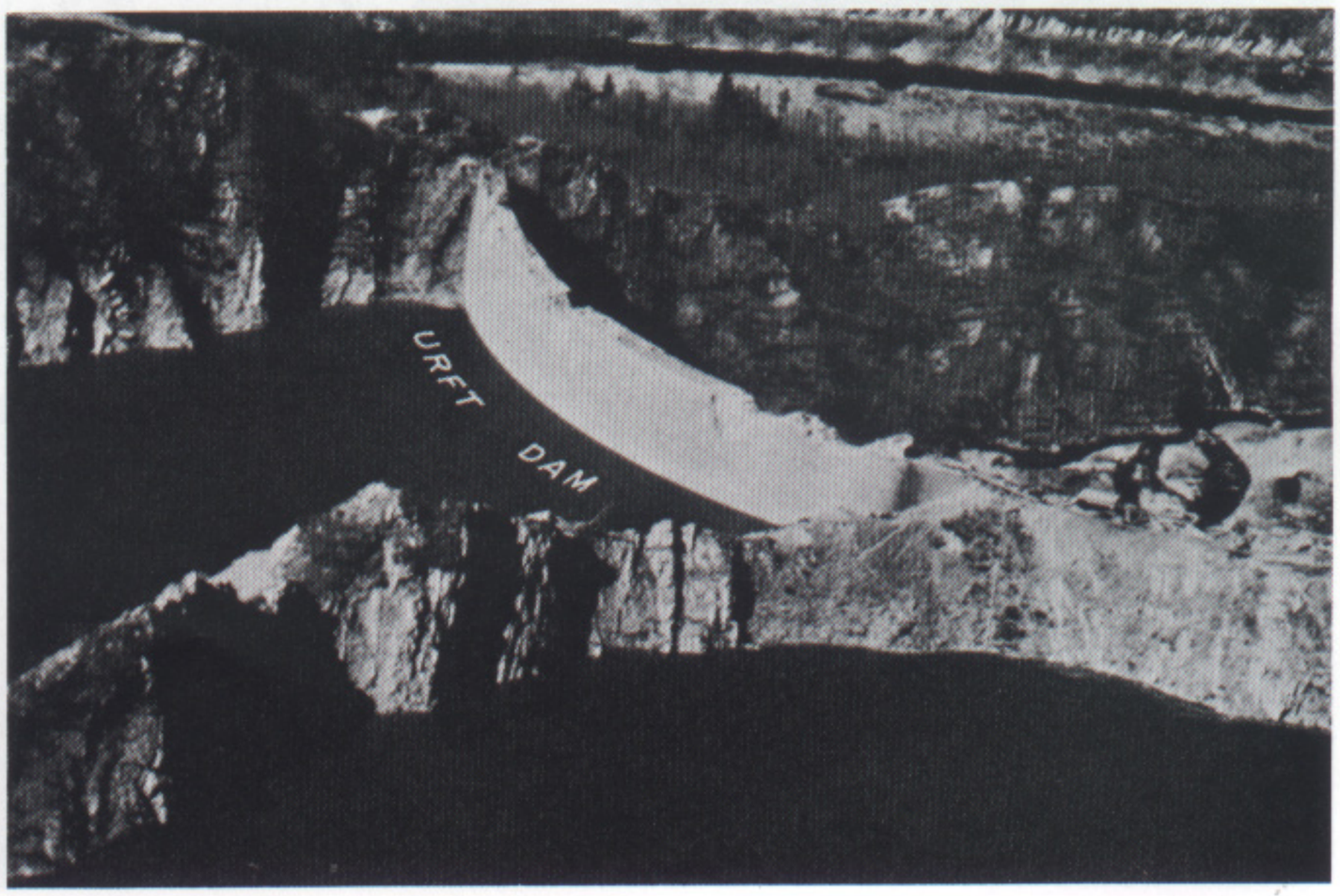
THE GERMANS IN THE FOREST

In the first days of September 1944, after the devastating defeat in France, the German Army had fallen back on the Siegfried Line, the defensive belt of fortifications along the German border consisting of hundreds of mutually supporting pillboxes, observation and command posts and bunkers. From a point north of Aachen to south of the Hürtgen Forest, the Siegfried Line divided into two separate belts, the Scharnhorst Line and the Schill Line. The first of the two, running along the western edge of the forest, was the thinner, but gained added strength from a continuous chain of anti-tank obstacles and dragon's teeth, in front of it. The second band, five miles to the rear, ran right through the heart of the forest. Although a bit obsolete by 1944 standards, the Siegfried Line was still a formidable barrier. Furthermore, four years of disuse and neglect had given the works a realistic camouflage, many pillboxes having blended so well with the surrounding landscape that they were almost impossible to spot among the trees. In addition, from just before the battle and all through it, the Germans in the Hürtgen had worked very hard to construct additional log bunkers, trenches, minefields and wire obstacles.

Holding this part of the front of Generalfeldmarschall Walter Model's Heeresgruppe B was the 7. Armee, led by General der Panzertruppen Erich Brandenberger. Two of his corps shared responsibility for the Hürtgenwald. In the north, defending the Aachen and Stolberg sector, stood Generalleutnant Erich Schack's LXXXI. Korps with four divisions. On his left wing, Schack had the 353. Infanterie-Division (Generalleutnant Paul Mahlmann). A mere conglomeration of five Landesschützen (local security) and Luftwaffe fortress battalions and an infantry replacement training regiment



Above: **The 50-foot-high Schwammenauel, constructed of earth over a concrete core in 1938, held back 100 million cubic metres with an area of 4.9 square kilometres.**



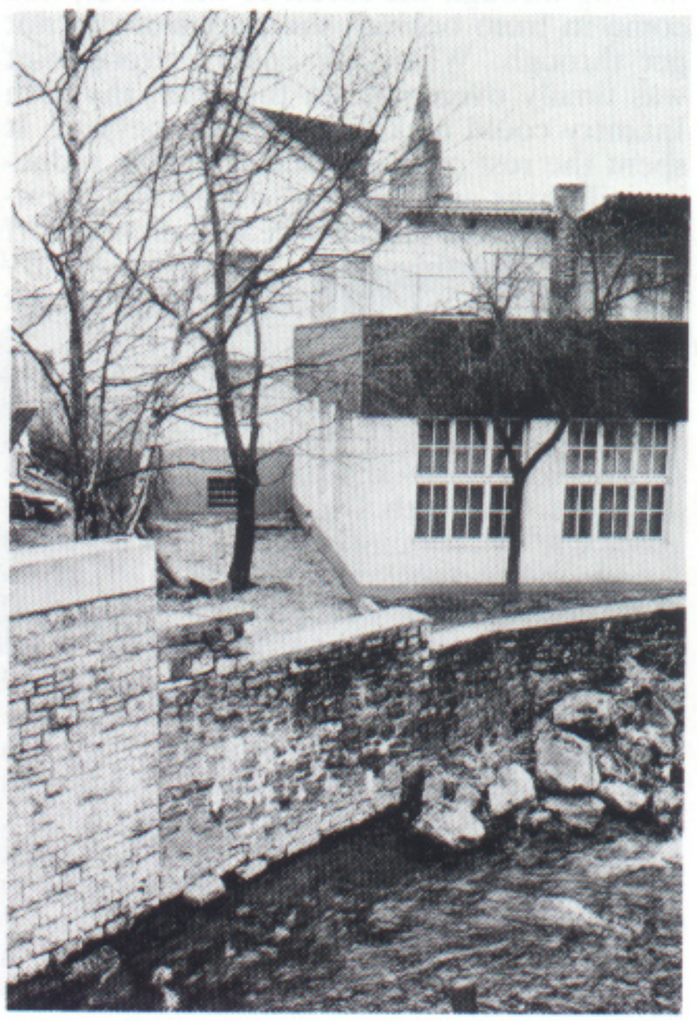
Right: **The second major dam — the Urft (45 million cubic metres) — lay near the confluence of that river with the Roer.**

On the night of September 13, in order to stop the American push into the Stolberg Corridor, German army engineers began to demolish all crossings of the Vicht river between the Wenau Forest and Stolberg in front of the Schill Line. The charge placed at the bridge at Zweifall was so powerful that it knocked down several homes near the river. Next day, Zweifall was captured by the 9th Division's 47th Infantry Regiment and American engineers quickly bridged the stream. It was from here that the division started its penetration of the forest on September 19. (US Army)

THE 9th DIVISION

On September 13, Major General J. Lawton Collins' VII Corps, part of Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges' First US Army, made its first penetration of the Siegfried Line at Nütheim and Roetgen (*see After the Battle No. 42*). Attacking the Siegfried Line south of Aachen, Collins hoped to break into the Stolberg Corridor, as a first step to a drive on the Roer and an encirclement of Aachen. The attack was made with three divisions: the 1st Division on the left, the 3rd Armored Division in the centre and the 9th Division on the right.

The 9th Division, commanded by Major General Louis A. Craig, thus became the first American formation to enter the great forest barrier. Attacking in the wake of the armour and close along its right flank, the 47th Infantry Regiment (Colonel George W. Smythe) cleared the village of Zweifall along the fringe of the Wenau Forest on September 14. Next day, against disorganised German resistance, it penetrated a portion of the Schill Line. On the 16th, after reducing the village of Vicht, the regiment made a spectacular advance of three miles through the forest fringe and seized the village of Schevenhütte. That day, a fresh German formation, the 12. Infanterie-Division



The view today, looking east across the new bridge into Jägerhausstrasse.

On the 16th, after a rapid dash through the woods, the 47th Infantry reached Schevenhütte *(left)*, an advance deeper into Germany than any other Allied unit so far. Next day, a company of Grenadier-Regiment 48 of the 12. Infanterie-Division, trying to move down on the village to retake it, was spotted in an open field and decimated with machine gun, mortar and artillery fire. During the night, another company sneaked into the village, only to encounter an American tank hidden among the buildings. Its fire virtually wiped it out. Turning the village into a veritable fortress, with mine fields and barbed wire, the Americans fought off the Germans for another four days before the enemy finally gave up. (US Army) *Right:* **No Shermans standing guard today. The main road leads, left, to Gressenich and Stolberg and, right, to Langerwehe.**

(Oberst Gerhard Engel), arrived by train, under priority orders from Hitler himself, in the LXXXI. Korps sector. Direct from training grounds in East Prussia, this division numbered 14,800 men and had its full complement of artillery and anti-tank guns. Committed at once, General Schack used it partly to block the Stolberg Corridor, partly to try and regain Schevenhütte.

For the next six days, the Americans tenaciously defended this village against repeated attempts by Engel's Grenadier-Regiment 48 to retake it.

Meanwhile, seven miles to the south, at the other end of the forest, the 39th Infantry (Lieutenant Colonel Van H. Bond) had on September 14 assaulted the Siegfried Line at Lammersdorf. The intention was to break through the pillbox line, push up the Monschau Corridor and join up with the 47th Infantry near Düren. However, this was one of the strongest parts of the Scharnhorst Line, defended by Infanterie-Regiment 1055 of the 89. Infanterie-Divison, and on the first day, all American battalions were stopped short of the dragon's teeth. Again next day, despite the help of armour firing point-blank at the pillboxes and even after one battalion, moving through the forest to the north, had come in from behind, the regiment did not get through. When the enemy strongpoint was finally overcome on the 16th, the 39th Infantry could make no advance beyond. It spent the rest of the month doggedly reducing pillboxes and fighting to gain two dominating features, Hill 554 near Lammersdorf and an open ridge near Rollesbroich. By September 30, it was stalled half in, half out of the West Wall.

Meanwhile, the push through the Stolberg Corridor had run its course and on September 18, General Collins had ordered his divisions to consolidate. At the same time, he ordered the 9th Division to shorten the corps line by cleaning out the forest between Schevenhütte and Lammersdorf. To accomplish this, General Craig moved in his third regiment, the 60th Infantry (Colonel Jesse H. Gibney). Up till now, the fighting had only touched the fringes of the forest. The 60th Infantry (less one battalion, but with one from the 39th Infantry under command) was the first to really enter the pine jungle. Colonel Gibney's orders were to drive right through six miles of dense forest and occupy the high-ground clearing around Hürtgen.

The attack started on September 19 with two battalions. The 39th Infantry battalion

In their attempts to dislodge the Americans, the Germans shelled Schevenhütte heavily. These civilians, fleeing from their homes on September 22, are leaving the village along Nideggerstrasse, which leads deeper into the forest. They would certainly have chosen another direction, had they known the war would soon follow them and with cruel revenge. (US Army)

The same road cleared of rubble and war debris.

moved due east from Zweifall and, late on the 20th, seized the valley of the Weisser Weh Creek. Here it was stopped by elements of 353. Infanterie-Division. Worse, when the battalion was recalled to assist the 47th Infantry at Schevenhütte, the Germans re-occupied the valley in strength. The other battalion, moving southeast from Zweifall, faced tough opposition from the outset, because it was advancing right along the trace of the Schill Line. Nevertheless, two days of fighting carried the battalion near to its initial objective: a wooded ridge north of Todtenbruch (Deadman's Moor). Here two battalions of the 353. Infanterie-Division, strengthened with assault guns, managed to halt the advance. For the next three days, close combat raged back and forth around a nest of three pillboxes. On September 21, the reserve battalion and the 39th Infantry battalion, back from Schevenhütte, took over the assault, but with a different direction of attack. Instead of moving east, towards Germeter, they were to strike south, through Todtenbruch, and make contact with the 39th Infantry fighting at Lammersdorf. The change in direction offered no relief. Five days later, the Americans had only cut the Lammerdorf-Germeter highway near Jägerhaus, a hunting lodge not one mile from Todtenbruch. By then, the weary 60th Infantry could go no further. The 9th Division's first attempt to penetrate the forest was over.

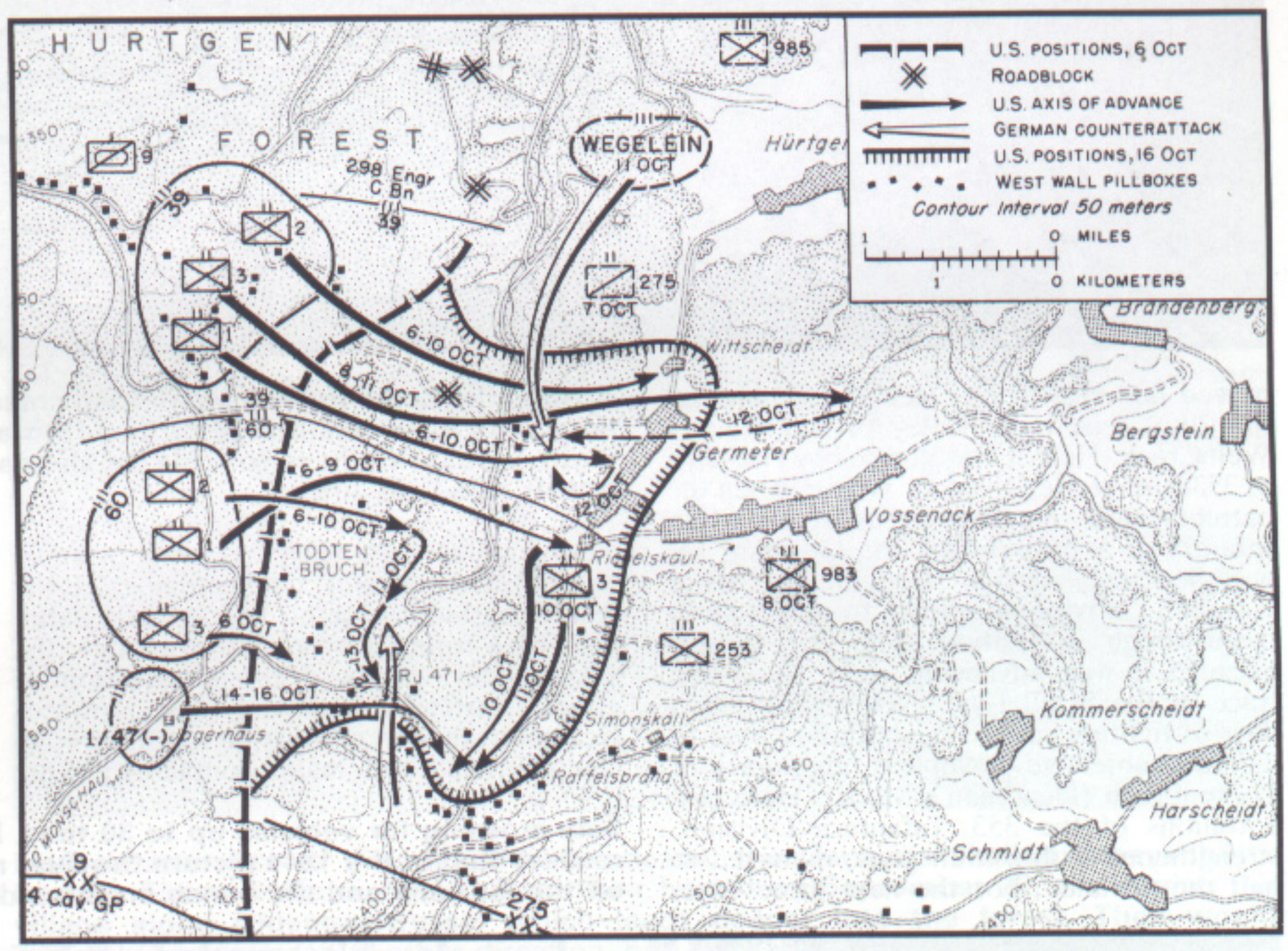
Around the bend, the Nideggen road crosses the Wehe river. Like at Zweifall, German engineers blew this bridge on the 13th and the refugees, in order to continue their flight, would first have to scale the debris caused by the demolition and wade across to this side. (US Army)

Safe crossing for vehicles up to 30 tons. It is only when one visits the site that one realises that in the 1944 picture the river must flow somewhere between the houses on the far bank and the bench on this side.

Germeter: captured by the 9th Division in its abortive October attack on Schmidt, and later the line of departure for the 28th Division's ill-fated November attack on Vossenack and, again, Schmidt. Located on the western edge of the large ridge-top clearing around Hürtgen, Germeter lay in full view of the Germans on the Brandenberg-Bergstein ridge further east. To conceal movement along the highway through the village, these 15-foot-high screening nets were hung up sometime in November, after the 8th Division had taken over from the 28th. (US Army)

But there was little respite for Craig's division. In early October, V Corps took over 15 miles of front from the VII Corps' south wing and this in turn enabled Collins to reduce the 9th Division's frontage. Craig was now to regroup his division for a stronger second attempt to push through the forest. Thus the job of clearing the forest fell for the second time to the 9th Division. Because the 47th Infantry was tied to the defense of Schevenhütte, Craig had only two regiments free to attack. On the right, the 60th Infantry (now led by Colonel John G. van Houten) was to cut the highway at the hamlet of Richelskaul, then turn south and occupy two ridge-top road junctions near another forester's lodge called Raffelsbrand. The 39th Infantry, on the left, was to seize Germeter, then push on to Vossenack and Schmidt.

By now, the 9th Division had a new adversary. On October 1, 275. Infanterie-Division (Generalleutnant Hans Schmidt) had taken over the troops and sector of the splintered 353. Infanterie-Division. The newcomer had been severely weakened in earlier fighting, but after absorption of the remnants of the 353. Infanterie-Division, it counted some 7,000 men, organised in three make-shift regiments. For artillery support, it had 14 howitzers and 6 assault guns. The only anti-tank weapons were bazookas and Panzerfäuste.



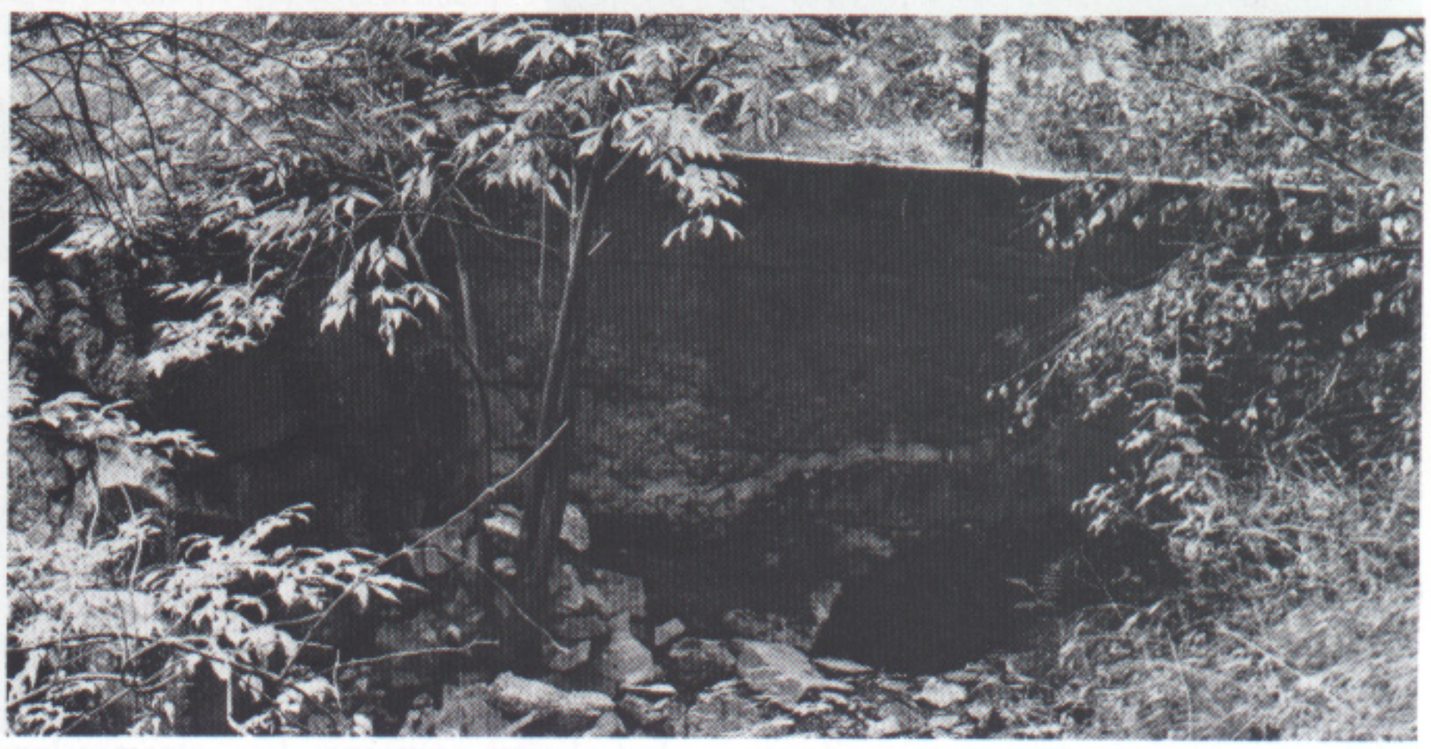
The 9th Division's attack on Schmidt, October 6-16.

The much better-surfaced road from Germeter to Hürtgen today. Vossenack is away to the right.

Both the 9th Division in October and the 28th Division in November fought hard trying to capture a network of bunkers and pillboxes around the Raffelsbrand road junction, two miles south of Germeter. It was a frustrating campaign, bogging down to complete stalemate and resulting only in crippling losses on the American side. On May 12, 1976, in the woods due south of the junction, three bodies were found in a common grave: two Americans and one German. The Americans could in time be positively identified as Francis Demple and Richard Quick, the German with whom they had shared a grave for 32 years remained unnamed. *Left:* **To mark the spot, this simple memorial stone was set up.** *Right:* **Less than fifteen yards away, across the forest trail, are the remains of pillbox No. 112 of the Schill Line. It might well have been an MG42 firing from this pillbox that killed the two Americans. Together, the memorial and the pillbox form a moving reminder of the struggle in this part of the forest.** *Below:* **Nearby, German trench systems still meander among the trees.**

The American attack started on October 6, after air strikes by P-47 dive bombers and a sharp five-minute artillery preparation. On the first day, advances across the valley of the Weisser Weh were painfully slow. One battalion smacked against an outpost position that would require almost a week to reduce. On the second day, units of both regiments gained the woods line overlooking Germeter and Richelskaul, but did not dare move out in the open without armour and anti-tank support. Held up by the tortuous and nearly trackless terrain, tanks and tank destroyers did not reach the infantry until late on the third day. With their help, the 60th Infantry successfully stormed Richelskaul, killing 60 Germans and capturing 100. Turning south, on the 10th it succeeded in taking the Raffelsbrand road junction as well.

Only one regimental objective remained, a nondescript road junction between Raffelsbrand and Jägerhaus. However, the woods around it were thick with pillboxes of the Schill Line and it took the 60th Infantry four days, October 11-14, to gain possession of the road fork.



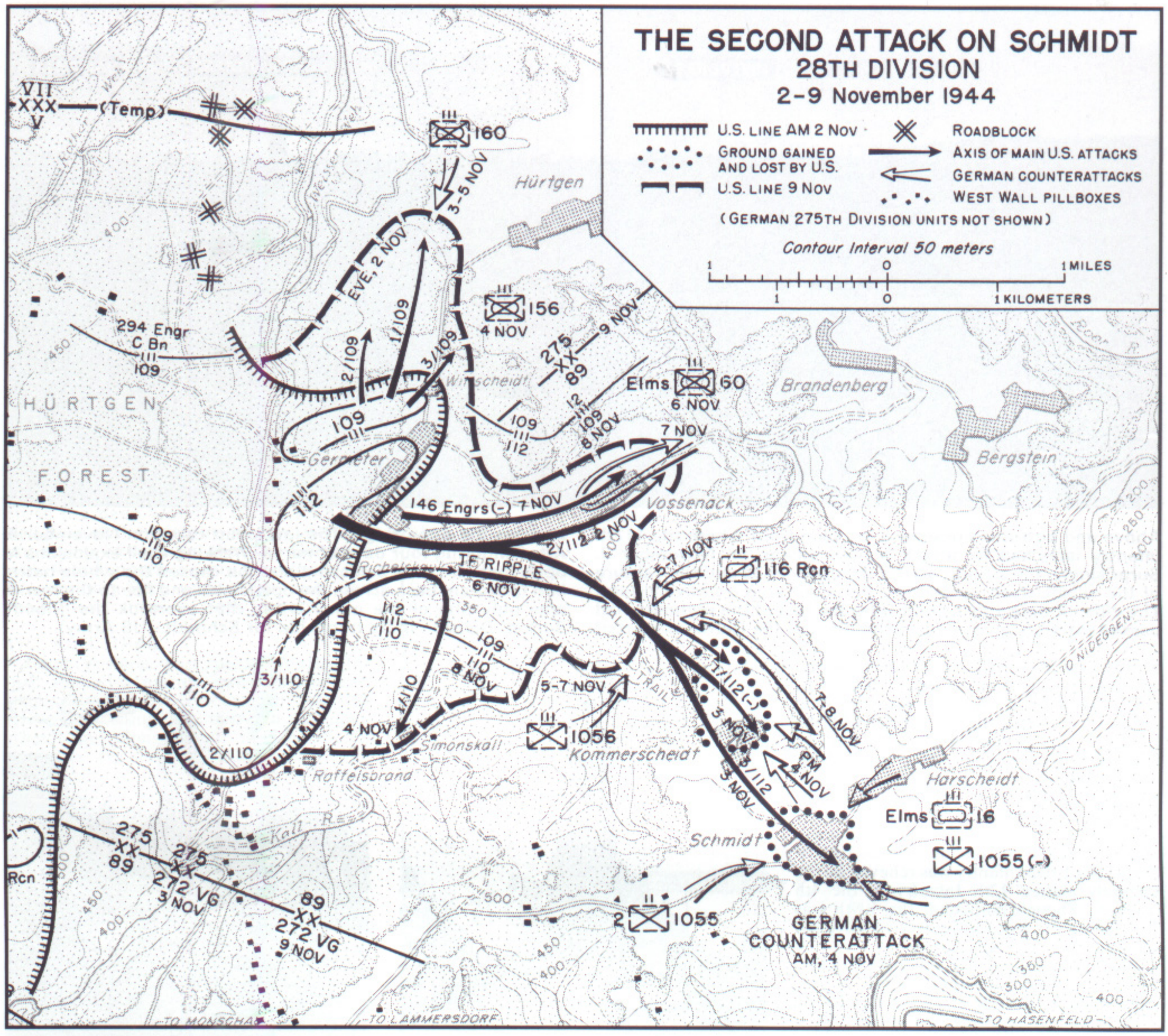
Remains of most of the Raffelsbrand fortifications can, with some effort, be found today, hidden in the woods. This is bunker No. 118, some 500 yards south-east of the junction, perched on top of a rock and overlooking the Kall valley.

'The bloody plateau north of Germeter.' In 1944, the thick woods rising from the Weisser Weh valley (on the left) reached out across the highway to Hürtgen and this formed a natural barrier for anyone trying to reach the latter. In addition the Germans, who called this sector 'Wilde Sau' (Wild Boar), had laid extensive minefields on either side of the road. Three regiments of as many different American divisions bled to death on the bloody plateau, trying to gain the woods line overlooking Hürtgen: the 39th Infantry of the 9th Division in October, the 109th Infantry of the 28th Division and the 12th Infantry of the 4th Division in November. Two German units suffered equally badly in attempts to counter American penetrations: Regiment Wegelein in October and the 116. Panzer-Division in November. (US Army)

Meanwhile, on the 10th, the 39th Infantry had cautiously entered Germeter. The Germans had abandoned it. But the next objective, Vossenack, proved more difficult.

Attempts to reach it across the open ground achieved nothing. But a battalion on the left, moving under the cloak of a wooded draw, reached a point north-east of the village undetected. Next morning, just as the 39th Infantry prepared to assault Vossenack from north and west, the 275. Infanterie-Division made a surprise counter-attack into the American rear. A newly-arrived, strong and well-equipped regiment, named after its commander Oberst Wegelein, attacking southwards between the Weisser Weh and the Germeter highway, broke through the over-extended American flank and cut the regimental supply trail. Because of faulty communications, the confusion in the forest and dogged resistance by little bands of Americans, Regiment Wegelein soon bogged down. But Colonel Bond was unaware of this and, to help seal off the enemy penetration, he recalled the battalion hiding in the woods north of Vossenack. It took the 39th Infantry three costly days, October 13-15, to restore its original flank positions. By that time the regiment, in fact the whole 9th Division, was spent and groggy. Its objective, Schmidt, had still not been reached. Its second attack through the forest had cost the division some 4,500 men and the 275. Infanterie-Division had lost over 3,000. The dreaded forest had claimed its first victims.

Today, the woods on the right of the road are somewhat thinner than they were in 1944. Whole areas of the Hürtgen Forest were utterly destroyed by the long weeks of shelling and, after the war, forest fires caused further destruction. Yet at most places, the outline of the forest, replanted in the post-war years, is amazingly similar to that of 1944.



THE 28th DIVISION

After the fall of Aachen on October 21 (*see After the Battle No. 42*), First Army planned a renewal of its big push to the Roer and Rhine. The main effort was to be made by Collins' VII Corps with four divisions. To secure his right flank, Hodges still believed he needed Schmidt and, wanting to keep VII Corps fresh for the main drive, on October 25 he shifted responsibility for its capture from VII Corps to Major General Leonard T. Gerow's V Corps.

By October 26, the 28th Division, commanded by Major General Norman D. Cota, had relieved the 9th Division in the forest. It now was to accomplish what the 9th had failed to do: to capture Schmidt. In conjunction, Major General Lunsford E. Oliver's 5th Armored Division was to attack up the Monschau Corridor from Lammersdorf. The original target date for the VII Corps offensive was November 5. Therefore, V Corps was instructed to start its attack no later than November 2, regardless of the weather. However, much of the reason behind this order ceased to exist on November 1, when, because of the atrocious weather, the main drive was postponed five days, to the 10th. Yet, 28th Division's attack was not changed accordingly. As it happened, the division found itself to be the only Allied attacking force along more than 170 miles of front, from Holland to Metz, and left to the wrath of German reserves.

For the attack on Schmidt, the 28th Division was strongly reinforced. Besides the usual battalion of tanks and tank destroyers, it was given a chemical (4.2-inch mortars) battalion, a battalion of towed anti-tank guns, the entire 1171st Engineer Combat Group and, in view of the rough terrain, 47 M29 Weasel carriers. In support were some eight battalions of corps artillery. Available for air support were six fighter bomber groups and one night bomber group.

On the German side, the 275. Infanterie-Division still held the forest. By now, General Schmidt had organised his ragbag assortment of troops into three regiments: the 983, 984 and 985.

The 28th Division jumped off at 9.00 a.m. on November 2, after a strong artillery barrage. Bad weather precluded most of the tactical air support. Of necessity, the plan of attack called for all three regiments to move in a different direction. (This divergence of missions was later regarded as a main cause for the division's subsequent fate.)

On the right, the 110th Infantry (Colonel Theodore A. Seely) was to attack southwards, break past the Raffelsbrand road junction and open up an alternative route into the Monschau Corridor. But this part of the forest was thick with pillboxes, log emplacements, and concertina strands and alive with trip wires, mines and booby traps. Both attacking battalions of the 110th, after hours of painful, costly infiltration attempts, reeled back dazed and stricken, to their line of departure.

Attacks on the second day proved even more costly and less rewarding. On the 4th, the reserve battalion tried a left flanking manoeuvre, down into the Kall gorge to the hamlet of Simonskall. Although it seized the hamlet, the stalemate at Raffelsbrand was not broken. The pillbox-studded gap between the battalions could not be closed. The exercise in futility continued for nine more terrible days. The lines at the end remained almost the same. On the 13th, the attack was called off.

On the division's left, the 109th Infantry (Lieutenant-Colonel Daniel B. Strickler) was to advance north-eastward, astride the Germeter-Hürtgen highway, and gain the woods line overlooking Hürtgen. The purpose of this was to prevent a repetition of the counter-attack against the north flank, like that experienced by the 9th Division.

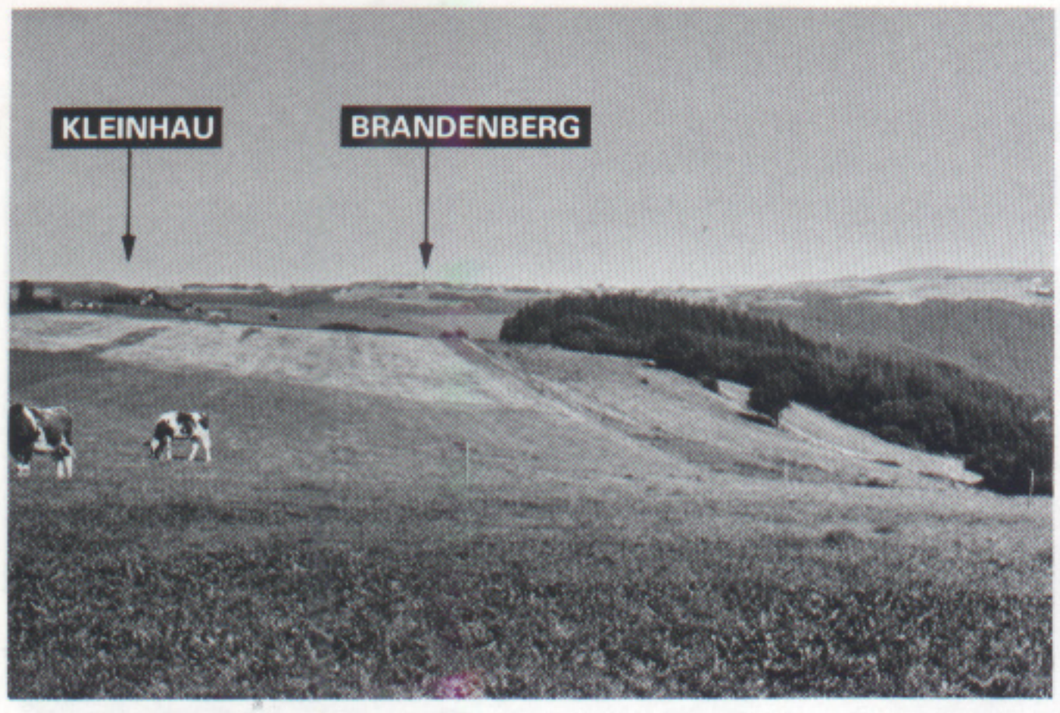
On the first day, the battalion west of the highway did reach the woods line, but the battalion on the road itself was stopped after only 300 yards by a dense anti-personnel minefield covered by machine guns. Attempts to outflank it next day failed because of two German counter-attacks on the battalion in the woods, which caused general confusion on the American side. For the next few days this situation continued. While the Americans had forged a narrow, mile-deep salient up the wooded plateau

Above and bottom: Vossenack, as seen from where the 112th Infantry launched its attack on the village on November 2. Surprisingly, the assault across the open fields and the capture of the village itself by the 2nd Battalion were relatively easy. The difficult time started only after the rest of the regiment had passed through, en route to Schmidt, and the Germans started shelling the open ridge. The low point came on November 6. After enduring four days of nerve-wrecking shell explosions in open foxholes, one panicking platoon caused the whole battalion to stream back across the open fields and flee to the rear. It was only one of the many crises that overtook the 'Bloody Bucket' Division in its tragic bid for Schmidt. (US Army)

between the Weisser Weh and the highway, the Germans held on to either side of it. Even commitment of the reserve battalion on the 4th did not change the balance, for the Germans had been reinforced too by Panzergrenadier-Regiment 60 (Oberst Heinrich Voightsberger) of 116. Panzer-Division. Meanwhile, casualties, mainly from tree bursts, soared. On the 6th, prompted by catastrophic events in the 112th Infantry's sector to its right and on direct orders from V Corps, the 109th Infantry was relieved by the hurriedly alerted 12th Infantry of the 4th Division. Though mutilated, the 109th was required as fire brigade reserve to stave off further disasters at Vossenack.

The 112th Infantry (Lieutenant-Colonel Carl L. Peterson), attacking in the centre, had had the main task. It was to attack east from Germeter, capture Vossenack, then thrust across the deep Kall gorge to reach first Kommerscheidt and finally Schmidt, the division objective. The start on November 2 was promising. With tank support, one battalion by early afternoon had taken Vossenack and reached the end of the ridge on which it lies. But the battalion that was to advance across country to Schmidt immediately came under intense fire and was pinned down for the rest of the day.

The situation was narrowly saved by the 146th Engineers, who, still wearing their rubber hip boots, restored a thin line near the village church. The church itself was retaken on the 7th by Company A: rushing across the street in ones and twos, two squads entered the church, firing through the main doors, killing some Germans and capturing six. Completely gutted *(left)*, the Saint Josef church was rebuilt after the war *(right)*. In front of it, to the right, is the turn-off to the Kall gorge.



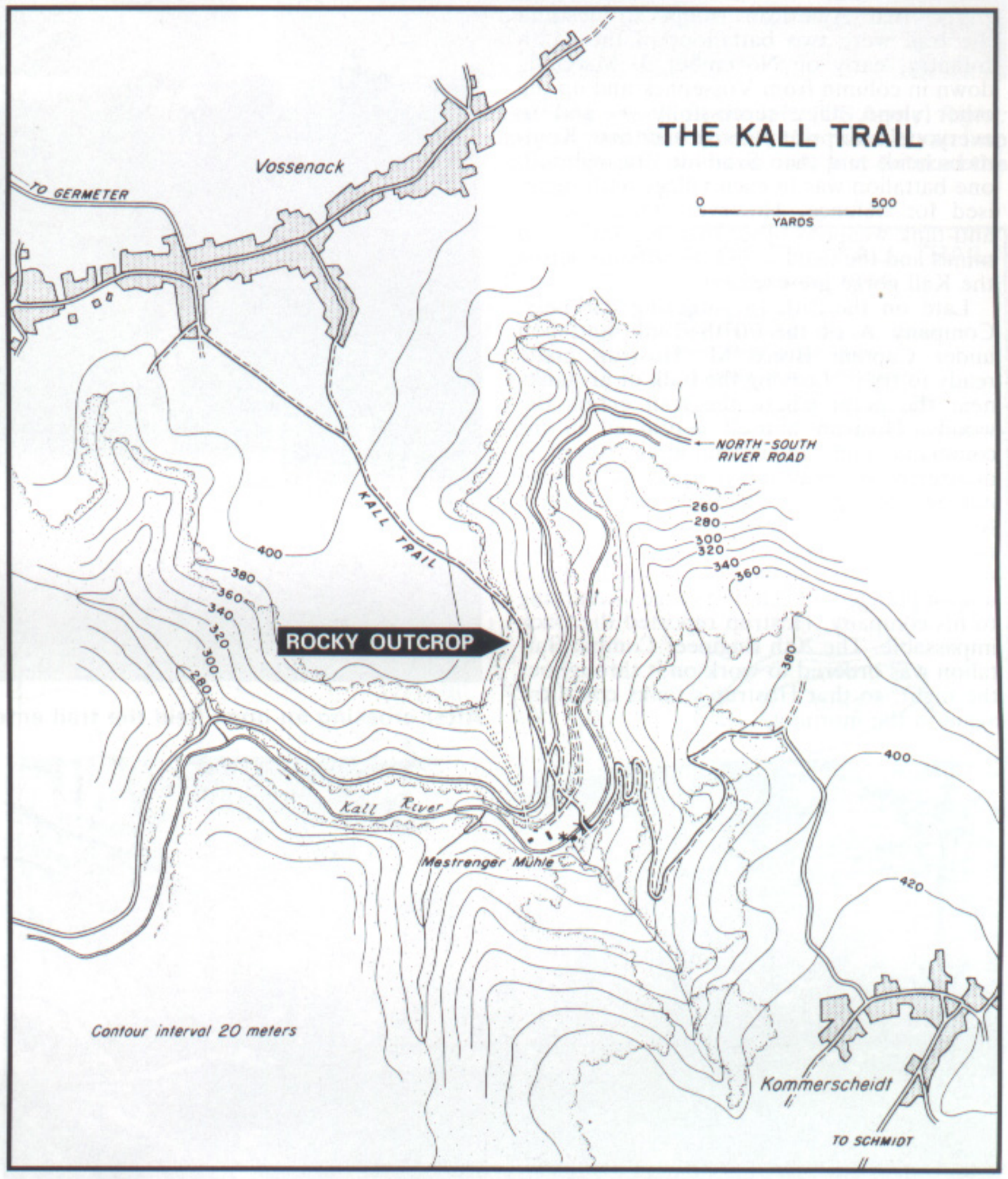
As the 28th Division troops moved out from Vossenack, they could see their objectives, Kommerscheidt and Schmidt, squatting on the bald ridge in the distance. To get there, they would have to pass 1,200 yards of open ridge, then cross the deep wooded ravine with the Kall river at the bottom; all this with the unnerving knowledge that the Germans were watching their every move from the Brandenberg-Bergstein ridge and had their guns trained on both targets.

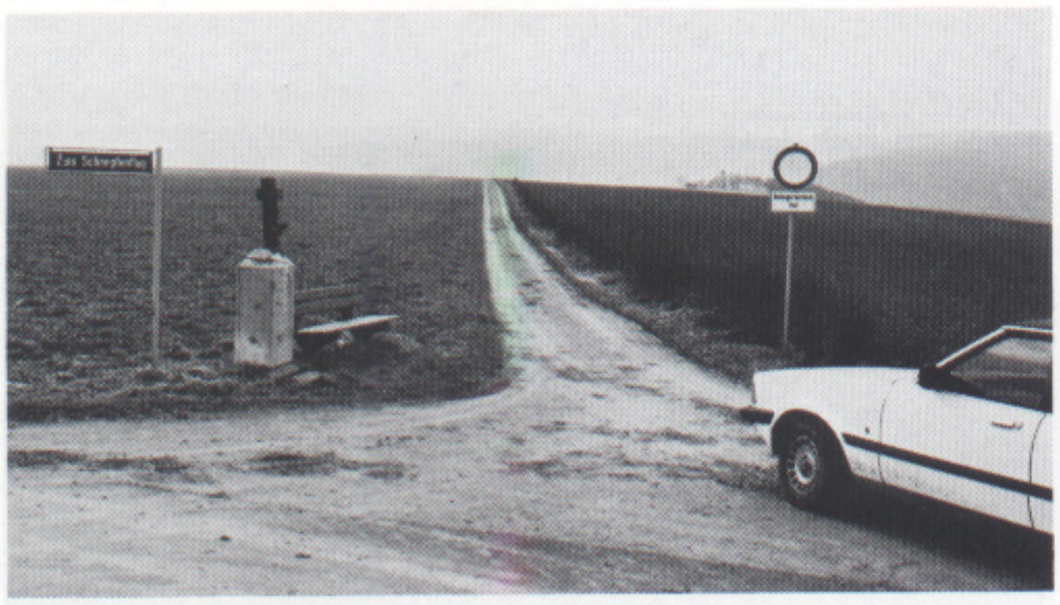
THE KALL TRAIL

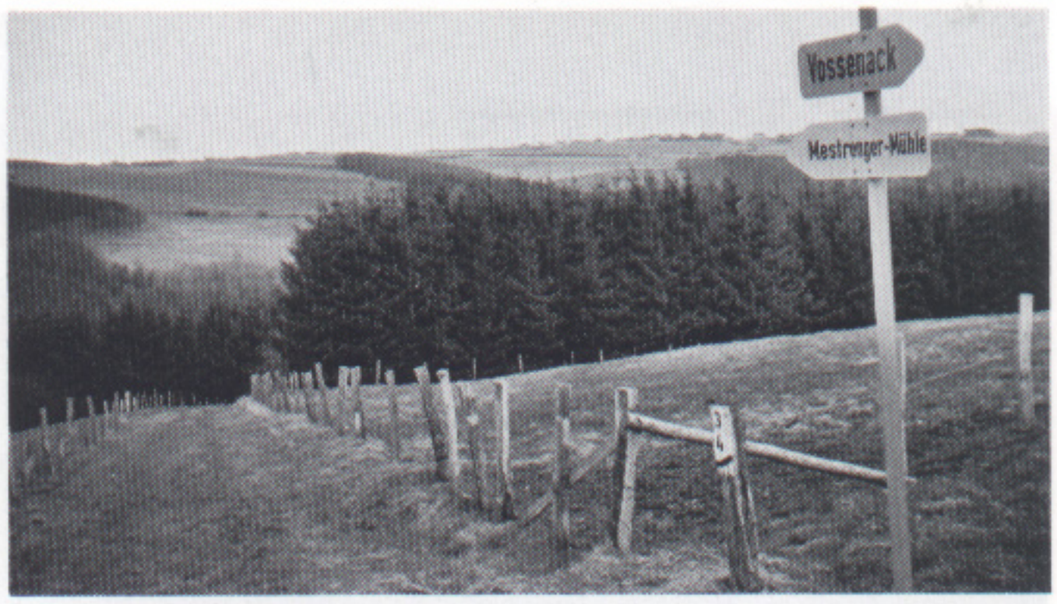
From Vossenack to the south-east, the map showed a narrow, two-mile-long cart track dropping precipitously to the Kall river, then rising tortuously to Kommerscheidt and along a spur to Schmidt. Its condition was unknown. On aerial photographs parts of it did not show up. On both sides, the Kall gorge led into German-held territory. Yet this trail was not only chosen as the 28th Division's axis of attack, but also its main supply route.

In actual fact, the trail was just a narrow shelf, at places only nine feet wide, limited abruptly on one side by a dirt wall studded with rock obstructions and on the other by a steep drop. At the bottom of the gorge, near an old sawmill called Mestrenger Mühle, a stone arch bridge forded the icy, swift-flowing Kall river.

The events along the Kall trail during the 28th Division's six-day battle for Schmidt have always stood out as the most dramatic of the whole Hürtgen Forest campaign. Here, along a narrow track, singularly unsuited to modern warfare, tankers toiled with their armour and close combat raged. Here, frantic men dug foxholes for protection against tree bursts and wounded men were left on their stretchers to die. For *After the Battle*, the Kall trail holds an extra fascination because so many clear traces of the action can still be seen today.







Left: **A lone Calvary stands at the junction with the small road which leads to the Kall trail.** *Right:* **At the beginning of the descent into the valley, a sign points to the Mestrenger Mühle, the old sawmill at the bottom of the ravine.**

The first American troops to descend the trail were two battalions of the 112th Infantry, early on November 3. Marching down in column from Vossenack and up the other slope, they successfully — and to everyone's surprise — reached first Kommerscheidt and then Schmidt. By nightfall, one battalion was in each village and organised for defence. However, they had no anti-tank weapons other than bazookas and mines and the need of getting armour across the Kall gorge grew urgent.

Late on the 3rd, in gathering darkness, Company A of the 707th Tank Battalion under Captain Bruce M. Hostrup made ready to try it. Leaving the bulk of his tanks near the point where the trail enters the woods, Hostrup himself continued in his command tank to reconnoitre. About a quarter of the way down, the trail became narrow and slippery. The left shoulder began to give way under the weight of the tank. The rocky outcrops on the other side denied movement to the right. The tank slipped and almost plunged off into the gorge. Returning to his company, Hostrup reported the track impassable. The 20th Engineer Combat Battalion was ordered to work on it throughout the night, so that Hostrup's tanks could try again in the morning.

After crossing an open field the trail enters the woods.

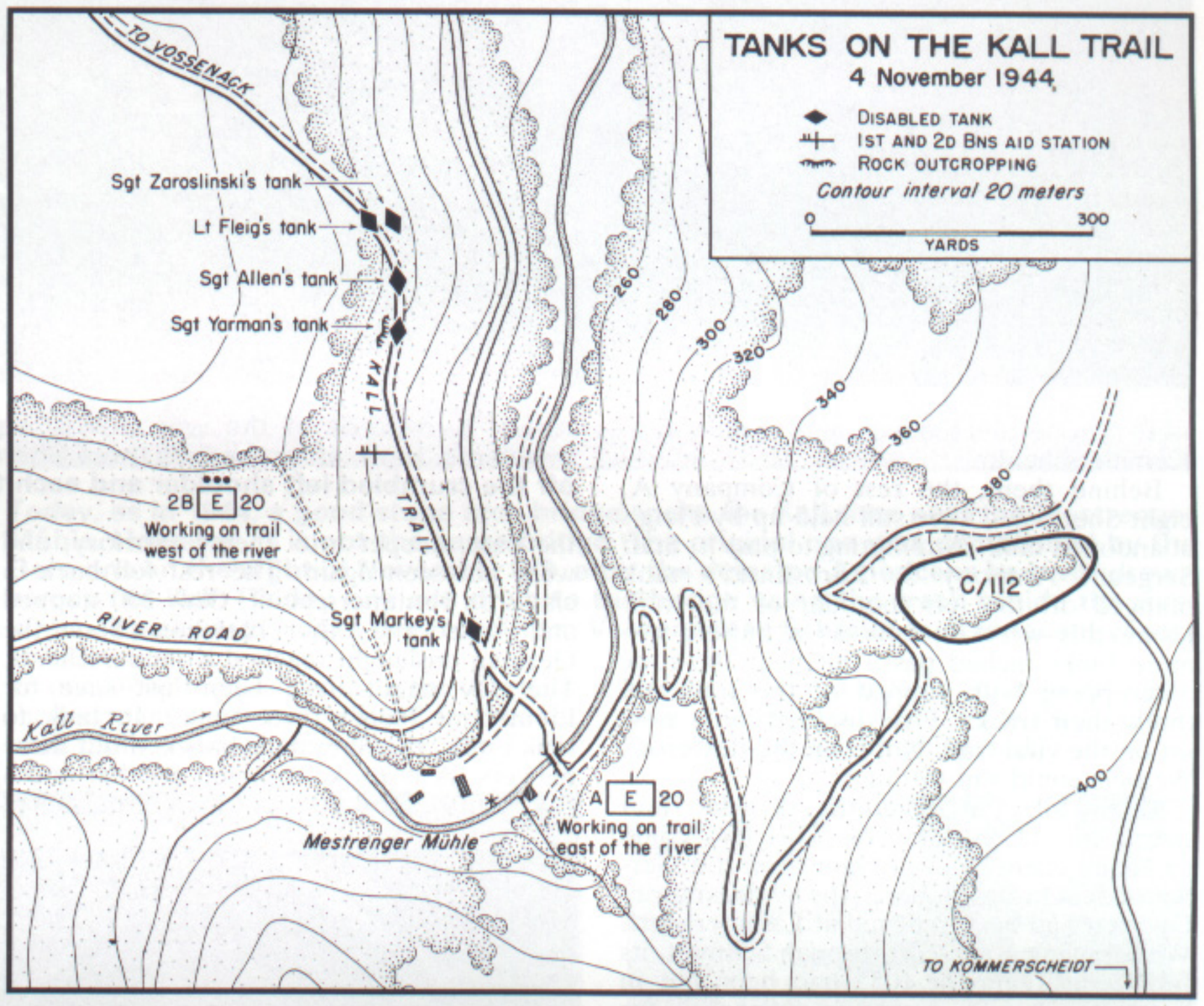
Marching down the trail on November 3, the men the 112th Infantry could see the Kommerscheidt-Schmidt ridge rise beyond the Kall river. No authenticated pictures appear to exist of the trail during the battle, this one being one of three photos taken shortly after the war for inclusion in the official US Army history of the battle.

No jerrycans in sight today. The track cutting across the trail is a new one, constructed in recent years to facilitate forestry work in the valley.

Left: **Thrown tank tracks mark the spot where the column of Company A, 707th Tank Battalion, in its eventful journey down the trail, met its first difficulties. Here Lieutenant Fleig's lead tank threw a track and Sergeant Zaroslinski's tank slipped off the trail trying to pass Fleig's tank on the left. (US Army)** *Right:* **Our comparison clearly shows how quickly the tankers ran into trouble: the view is upwards and we have only just entered the woods.**

The engineers had only hand tools with them and no explosives. A bulldozer and air compressor only reached the site at 2.30 a.m., the bulldozer breaking down after one hour's work. The trail had been little improved when Company A started its second attempt, about an hour before dawn on the 4th. The lead tank of 1st Lieutenant Raymond E. Fleig had just entered the woods when it struck a mine, partially blocking the trail. By using the tow cable from Fleig's tank and the tank itself as a pivot, the tankers finally winched four Shermans past.

Fleig then boarded the lead tank and by tortuous backing and turning finally reached the Kall to begin the toilsome last lap to Kommerscheidt just as day was breaking. Behind him he left the shoulder of the trail torn and crumbling. The other three tanks of his 1st Platoon followed him down with utmost difficulty and caution. They encountered a particular problem at one point where a projecting outcrop of rock made it impossible to hug the right side of the trail. Here, Sergeant Jack L. Barton's tank threw a track. The next in line, Staff Sergeant Anthony R. Spooner's, towed it back onto the trail and the track was righted. Using Spooner's tank as an anchor, Barton then successfully rounded the curve. In this way, the other two made it past as well. But near the bottom of the gorge, the last of the three tanks, Sergeant James J. Markey's, stuck in the mud and threw a track. Only three tanks



As the tanks slithered down the trail, at some parts a dirt bank on the left shoulder somewhat lessened the danger of slipping off into the gorge.

The spot, close to the river, where Sergeant Markey's tank stuck in the mud. (The map is from the official US Army history *Three Battles*.)

About two-thirds of the way down, a protruding outcrop of rock presented new problems. Here, after the first three Shermans had inched past, the next two slipped off the crumbled left shoulder and each threw a track.

were now beyond the river and on the way to Kommerscheidt.

Behind them, the rest of Company A, eight Shermans, were still held up by Fleig's abandoned tank. Attempting to pass it, Staff Sergeant Anthony S. Zaroslinski's tank plunged off the left shoulder of the trail. Using this wrecked tank as a buffer, two more tanks inched past; but near the rock outcropping both slipped of the trail and threw their tracks. Five disabled tanks now sat on the vital trail. Not even the dexterous Weasels could slip through.

Meanwhile, at Schmidt, disaster had struck the 112th Infantry. This had come about by chance developments on the German side. On November 3, the 89. Infanterie-Division had been relieved at Lammersdorf. Withdrawing north-east through Schmidt, its Infanterie-Regiment 1055 had been cut in two by the American capture of Schmidt, for one of its battalions had yet to pass through the village. Thus, by chance, this regiment found itself in a ready-made encirclement of Schmidt. Also by pure coincidence, when the American attack began on the 2nd, a map exercise of German army, corps and division commanders was in progress at Model's army group headquarters near Cologne. Its subject was a theoretical attack on Hürtgen. When news of the actual attack came in, the conference continued with this as subject. Also, Model freed the 116. Panzer-Division (Generalmajor Siegfried von Waldenburg) to assist in countering the American penetration. Its Panzergrenadier-Regiment 156 went to Vossenack; Panzergrenadier-Regiment 60 to Hürtgen; and Panzer-Regiment 16, with some 25 tanks, to Schmidt.

At dawn on the 4th, the combined force of Panzer-Regiment 16 (Oberst Johannes Bayer) and Infanterie-Regiment 1055 struck at Schmidt from both north and south-west. Unable to stop the armour firing point-blank into houses and foxholes, the American battalion broke. About 200 men fled to the east, deeper into enemy territory, and were not seen again. The rest fell back in chaos on Kommerscheidt. Only 200 stopped and joined the other battalion. Soon the German onslaught reached Kommerscheidt. The day might have been lost save for Lieutenant Fleig's three tanks. In tank to tank duels, the Shermans knocked out three panzers. A bazooka disabled another and a P-47 a fifth. By 4.00 p.m., the Germans had begun to fall back. From his command post back at Rott, General Cota now ordered an attack to retake Schmidt. But Colonel Peterson realised he would be lucky if he could only hold Kommerscheidt.

That night, another unit from 89. Infanterie-Division, Infanterie-Regiment 1056 (Oberst Eberhard Roesler), arrived from Lammersdorf to strengthen the German ring around the Americans.

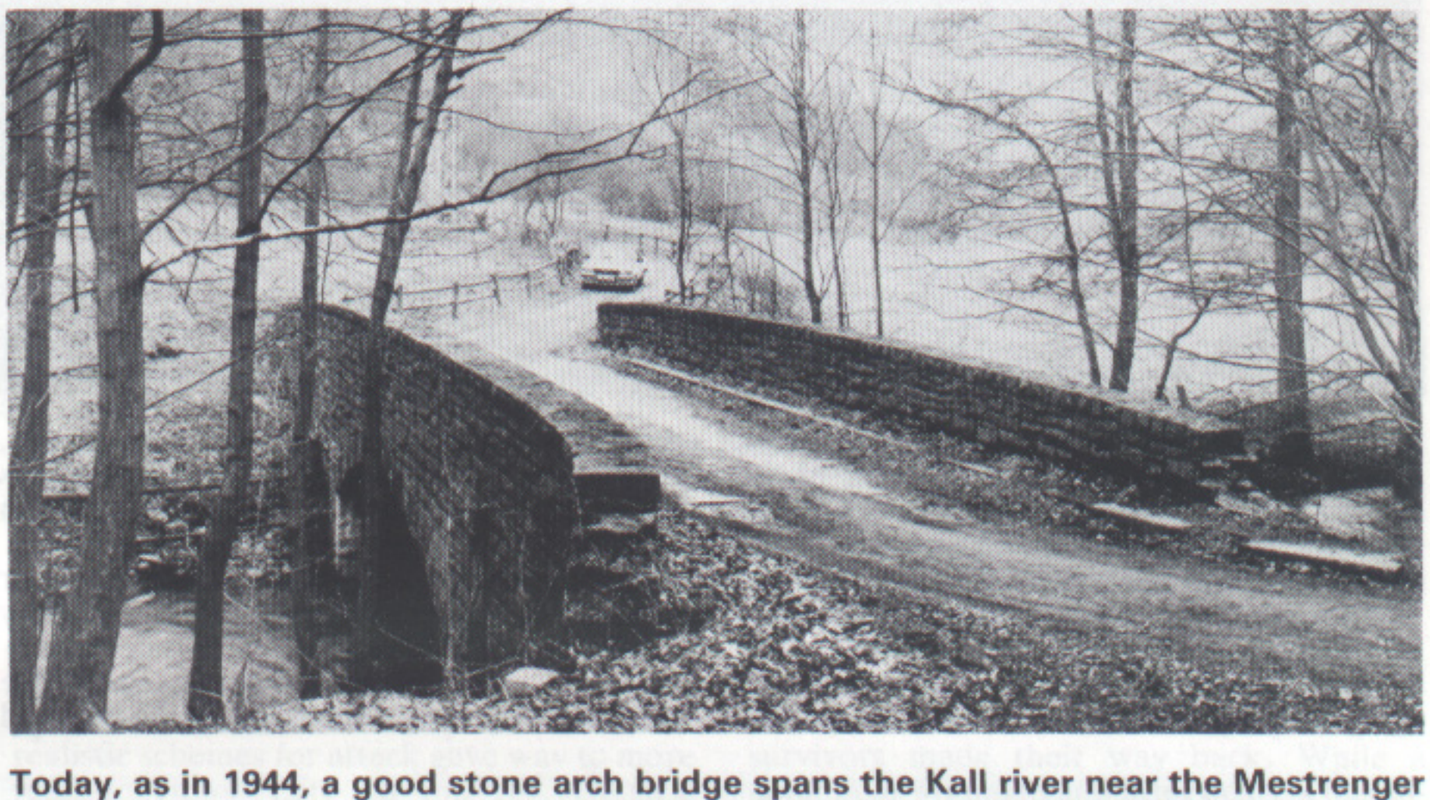
The view back up the trail. For twenty crucial hours, the rock proved an unpassable obstacle until the 20th Combat Engineers at last blasted it away during the night of November 4/5. Traces of their demolition work can clearly be discerned today.

Looking back from where Markey's Sherman blocked the passage for other vehicles, we see the Kall trail coming down on the left and another track leading down to the right. This is what came to be known as 'the switchback'.

The track on the right, but now seen from the other end. By backing up towards the junction in the foreground, then going forward along the track on the left until it picked up the Kall trail proper, vehicles could bypass Sergeant Markey's tank.

The crisis at Schmidt doubled the urgency of opening the Kall trail and getting armour to Kommerscheidt. Yet, all through the 4th, the engineers and tankers, instead of pushing the disabled tanks off the trail into the gorge and use explosives on the troublesome outcrop of rock, worked to save the tanks, righting the tracks only to watch them jump off again after a few yards. Not until 2.30 a.m., November 5, did General Cota intervene with an order to roll four of the tanks down the slope and to blow the rock. Sergeant Markey's tank, stuck near the river, could be bypassed using a 'switchback' route of two other tracks. The trail finally open, five supply Weasels, nine M10s of Company C, 893rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the six remaining tanks of Hostrup's Company A crossed the river early on the 5th and joined the defenders of Kommerscheidt. With these, the remnants of the 112th Infantry held off repeated German strikes during the day. Also, clearing weather for the first time enabled dive bombers to really support the ground troops.

That night, recce troops of Panzer-aufklärungs-Abteilung 116 entered the Kall gorge from the north, along the track parallel with the river. The 20th Engineers, who were responsible for defending the trail, had only a four-man security guard at the bridge, but no one along the trail itself. In the darkness, the Germans easily reached and severed the vital trail. Although they mined the track, the cut was not complete: through the night, some Americans were ambushed, others traversed the gulch unhindered.



Today, as in 1944, a good stone arch bridge spans the Kall river near the Mestrenger Mühle. However, it is not the same bridge. The original one was demolished by the Germans on the night of November 8/9, after the defeated Americans had withdrawn across the Kall. (Today one can drive to the bridge using the track beside the river which is picked up from a new road from Vossenack to Schmidt built in recent years.)

The climb up from the Kall river towards Kommerscheidt and Schmidt is markedly less difficult for vehicles than the descent down from Vossenack. One of the problem spots was this hairpin bend, about 200 yards up from the bridge. Here, tank commanders were forced to dismount to direct their drivers.

A little higher up can be found a fitting reminder of the armour's plight in the Kall battle: an American tank track buried deep in the soil. (Theo Schers)

On November 4, the 893rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, in fire positions near Zweifall, was told to move to Vossenack and await orders to cross the Kall gorge and reinforce the beleagered defenders of Kommerscheidt and Schmidt. Moving up through the forest, still west of Germeter, these M10s of the 893rd were pictured by Signal Corps photographer Goodman en route to Vossenack. Next day, one platoon of Company C successfully crossed the gorge. (US Army)

Strangely enough, this threat to their supply line was solved by the Americans before they actually realised it. The day before, General Cota had formed Task Force Ripple, under the commander of the 707th Tank Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel Richard W. Ripple. It was to consist of the tanks and tank destroyers already at Kommerscheidt, plus another platoon of TDs, a company of light tanks and a battered battalion of the 110th Infantry. Its task was to retake Schmidt. Before dawn on the 6th, Task Force Ripple's infantry battalion crossed the gorge by way of a firebreak parallel with the trail. Embroiled in firefights all the way down, they in effect, but unwittingly, drove the Germans off the trail. (Ripple's light tanks and tank destroyers never even attempted a passage.)

Meanwhile, back at Vossenack, another crisis had arisen that threatened the very existence of the 28th Division. Under observation from enemy artillery massed on the Brandenberg-Bergstein ridge, and unnerved by three days and four nights of merciless shelling, the battalion of the 112th Infantry holding the bald, exposed Vossenack ridge, cracked. At daybreak — not because of any counter-attack, but simply because its nerves had gone — one company panicked and broke. Within minutes, the whole battalion was on the run, streaming past the village and to the rear. Only the attached armour stayed in place.

To deal with the crisis, the assistant division commander, Brigadier General George A. Davis, had only engineer troops left. The 146th Combat Engineers were sent into Vossenack to man a thin line at the village church. The 1340th and the remnants of the 20th Engineers were sent to the Kall gorge, which, to their surprise, they found empty of Germans. Next morning, just beating Panzergrenadier-Regiment 156 to the attack, the 146th Engineers charged forward from Vossenack and restored the former positions on the ridge nose.

But in the Kall gorge, the situation was less lucid. During the night, Aufklärungs-Abteilung 116 had moved back in and again cut the trail, this time making contact with Infanterie-Regiment 1056 which had entered the ravine from the south. Yet, in these same hours, an American supply column crossed and recrossed the Kall.

On the 7th, General Cota formed another task force, under General Davis. Apart from the infantry and armour already in Kommerscheidt, it was to consist of a battalion of the 109th Infantry, just relieved after four days of crippling combat, and a company each of tanks and TDs. Its task was, again, to retake Schmidt. But Task Force Davis never got to Kommerscheidt. Four of the M10s, of Company B, 893rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, were knocked out on the open ridge even before they reached the point where the trail entered the woods. Another battalion of the 109th, ordered to secure the gorge, got lost and ended up near Richelskaul.

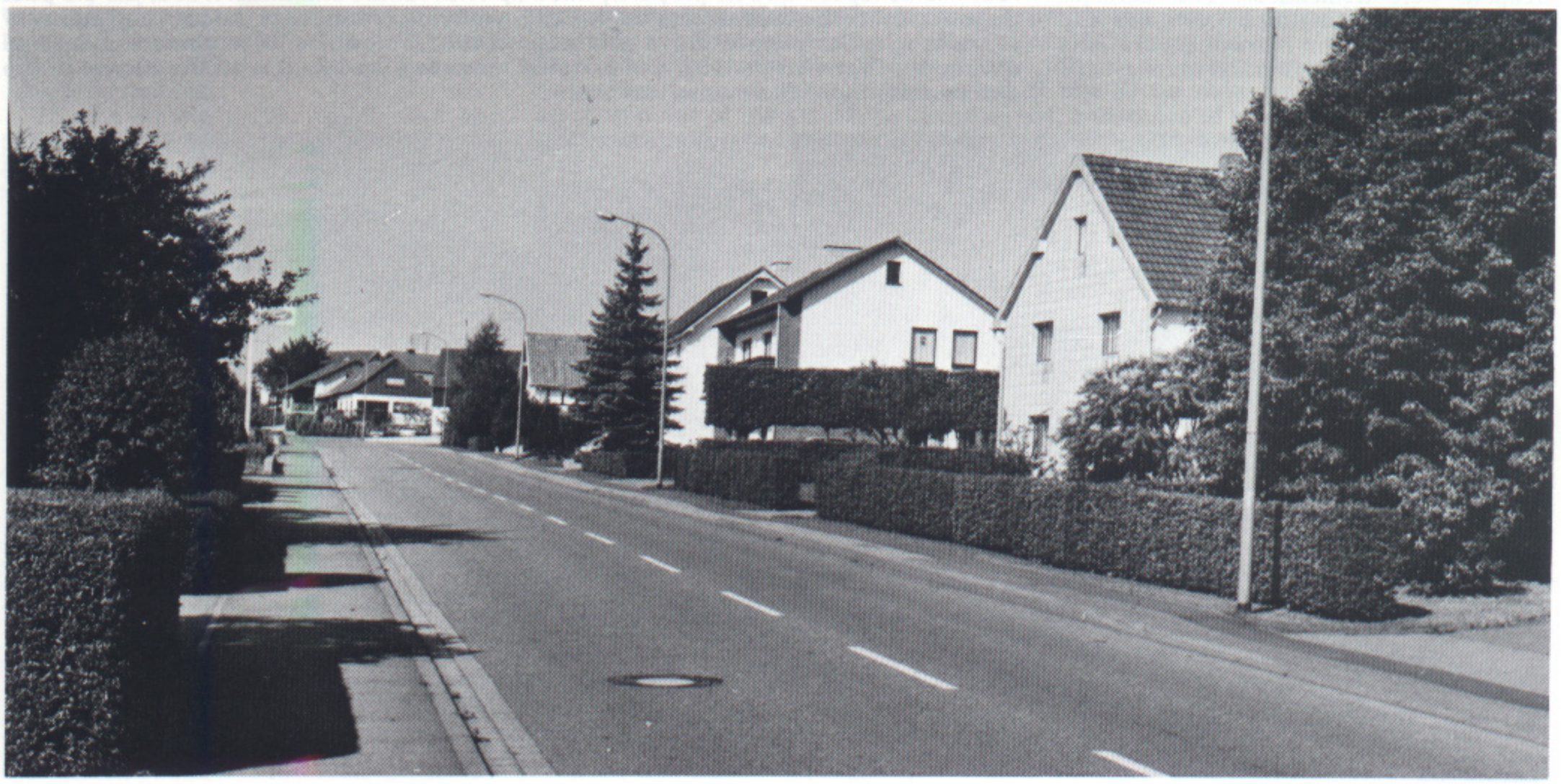
On the 7th, as the situation at Kommerscheidt was going from bad to worse, four M10s of the 2nd Platoon, Company B, loaded with extra ammo, rations, medical supplies and additional machine guns, attempted to run the Kall gauntlet. *Left:* None of them ever even got to the trail. Venturing out of Vossenack and trying to speed across the 1,200 yards of exposed ridge between the village and the woods, three were knocked out by German shelling and the fourth was going so fast that it skidded out of control and down into the wooded gorge to the left of the trail entrance. (US Army) *Right:* The field at the entrance to the trail today. The village on the horizon is Kommerscheidt.

The 28th Division's stay at Schmidt was brief and painful. The 3rd Battalion of the 112th Infantry held it for only twenty hours before it was forcefully ejected from the village by superior German forces on November 4 and plans to retake the village became more and more unrealistic as the battle developed. Schmidt was not finally captured until February 1945 by the 82nd Airborne and 78th Divisions. Here Company G of the 325th Glider Infantry enters the ruined village. (US Army)

Meanwhile, at Kommerscheidt, the 89. Infanterie-Division had gone in for the kill. Two battalions and some fifteen tanks attacked the depleted Americans in full force. In a pitched fight, the Americans knocked out six panzers against three M10s and two Shermans lost. (In the middle of the fight, an erroneous message directed Colonel Peterson to report immediately to the Division Command Post. Leaving Colonel Ripple in command, Peterson made his way back. When Cota saw Peterson arrive, exhausted, twice-wounded and semi-delirious, the General fainted.) By noon the Germans had reduced the village. Driven out, the last Americans, with only two TDs and one tank left, narrowly held on to the woods line above the Kall gorge.

The catastrophe at Vossenack on November 6 and at Kommerscheidt on the 7th finally brought home the plight of the 28th Division to higher commanders. Initial optimism turned into sharp criticism; unrealistic schemes for attack gave way to more realistic views. Late on the 7th, General Hodges of the First Army approved the withdrawal of all troops from beyond the Kall. Another day, November 8, was needed for Task Force Davis to attempt to secure the western slope of the gorge. Meanwhile, a new commander for the 112th Infantry, Colonel Gustin M. Nelson, proceeded to Kommerscheidt. That night, in pitch darkness and under a cloak of artillery fire, the survivors made their way back. While a column of wounded and litter bearers marched openly down the trail, a line of effectives moved back across country. In both, because of the blackness of the night and German shelling, all formation was quickly lost. Alone, or in small groups, the men forded the icy Kall, but of the 2,200 men that had crossed to the east bank, barely 300 came back.

In 1945, the attack on Schmidt was made from the south-west, through the Monschau Corridor. This is Hauptstrasse, leading to the L-246 and Monschau.

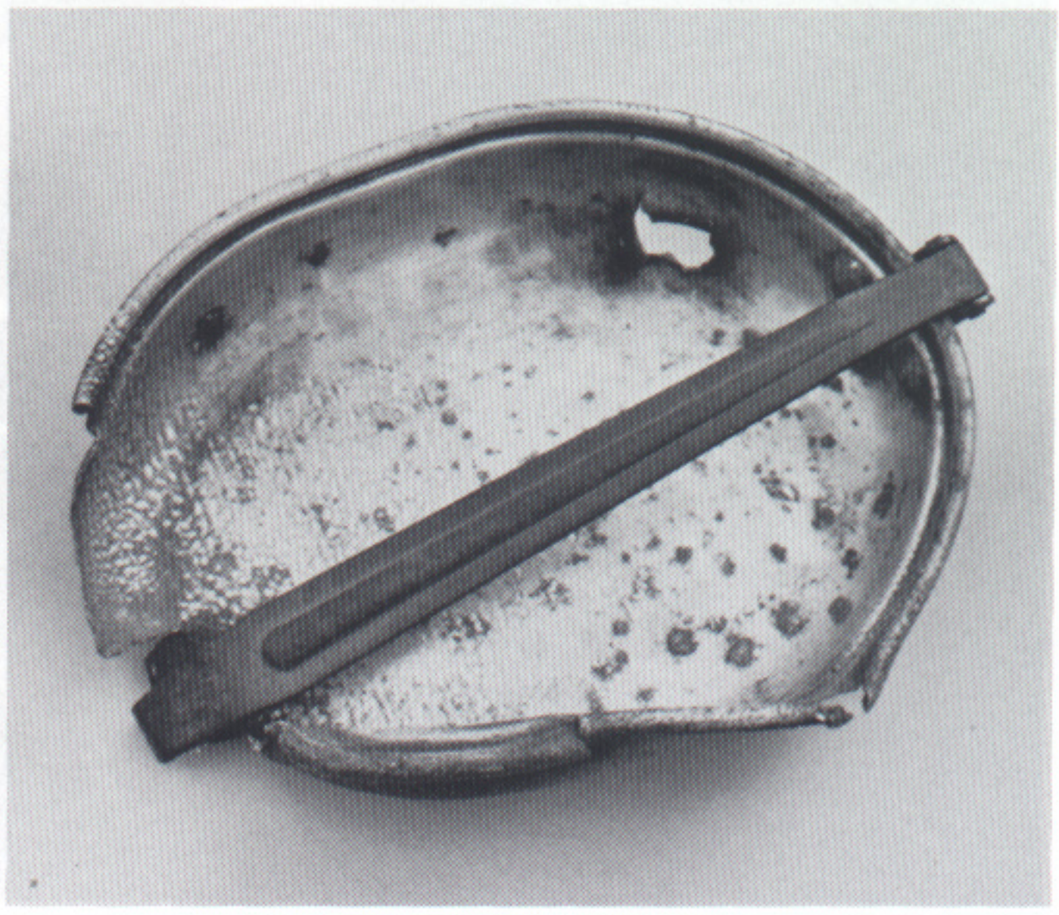


The medics and patients of the American aid station along the Kall trail, left behind in no man's land in the confusion of the withdrawal and for two days virtual prisoners of the Germans, did not get out until late on November 11.

The second attack on Schmidt had developed into one of the most costly US divisional actions in the whole of the Second World War. In all, the 28th Division and attached units had lost 6,184 men. Hardest hit was the 112th Infantry: 232 men captured, 431 missing, 719 wounded, 167 killed and 544 non-battle casualties — a total of 2,093.

Thirty-one tanks and 16 TDs had been lost. Losses in trucks, Weasels, anti-tank guns, machine guns, mortars and individual weapons were tremendous. The Germans had lost heavily too: some 3,000 men and about 15 tanks. On November 13, First Army ordered the 8th Division to relieve the crippled 28th Division.

Alongside the Kall trail, 300 yards up from the river and some yards up the western bank, lay a large German dugout, about 12 by 18 feet in size. It was entirely underground except for a front partially barricaded with rocks. The roof had been constructed of two heavy layers of logs, providing excellent protection from all shelling except direct hits. Here, on the third day, medics of the 3rd Battalion, 112th Infantry, later joined by those of the 1st, established an aid station. All through the battle, walking wounded were treated here and sent to the rear, but lack of Weasels and stretcher bearers prevented evacuation of the seriously wounded. When the Germans cut the trail, on the night of the 5th, several of their patrols knocked at the door of the cabin. Satisfying themselves that the medics were unarmed, they posted a guard and left. From then on, the aid post was left in a kind of no man's land. By the 7th, it had become so crowded with some 60 litter cases that many had to be left outside, exposed to the rain, cold and shelling. In the confusion of the American withdrawal, the aid station was all but forgotten and for the next three days medics and patients were virtual prisoners of the Germans. The last group only got out on November 11, after the Germans themselves had asked for a truce to collect their dead. The Americans had to leave behind all their dead — several dozen — outside the dugout. Today, although its roof has collapsed and its pit partly filled up with rubble and underwood, the aid post dugout can still be seen alongside the trail, a moving reminder of the pain and agony of 47 years ago. Our picture *above* was taken in 1982. *Below:* Pitiful reminders unearthed during our first visit in 1982: bullet-holed mess tins inscribed with the names of the unfortunate individuals who lost them.



For the 28th Division's commander, Major General Norman 'Dutch' Cota, the Schmidt battle was the low point of his career. With plans of attack determined by previous battles and settled beforehand by General Gerow, his corps commander, Cota could little influence events once the battle started. On the 7th, tired from long days and sleepless nights and mentally exhausted from what was happening to his division, the sudden appearance of one of his regimental commanders, whom Cota expected to be at the front, was enough to make him faint to the floor. Two days later General Eisenhower, together with Generals Bradley, Hodges and Gerow, visited his Division CP at Rott. During the meeting Hodges of First Army drew Cota aside for a 'short sharp conference' in which he remarked on the fact that division HQ appeared to have no precise knowledge of the location of its units and was doing nothing to obtain the information. The picture of the tormented Cota and the worried-looking Eisenhower *(left)* **was taken outside the division CP, which was at 23 Quirinusstrasse, a village inn owned by the Emonts family. (US Army)** *Right:* **This nicely-staged comparison was taken by one of our American readers, Cyrus Lee.**

The 1st DIVISION

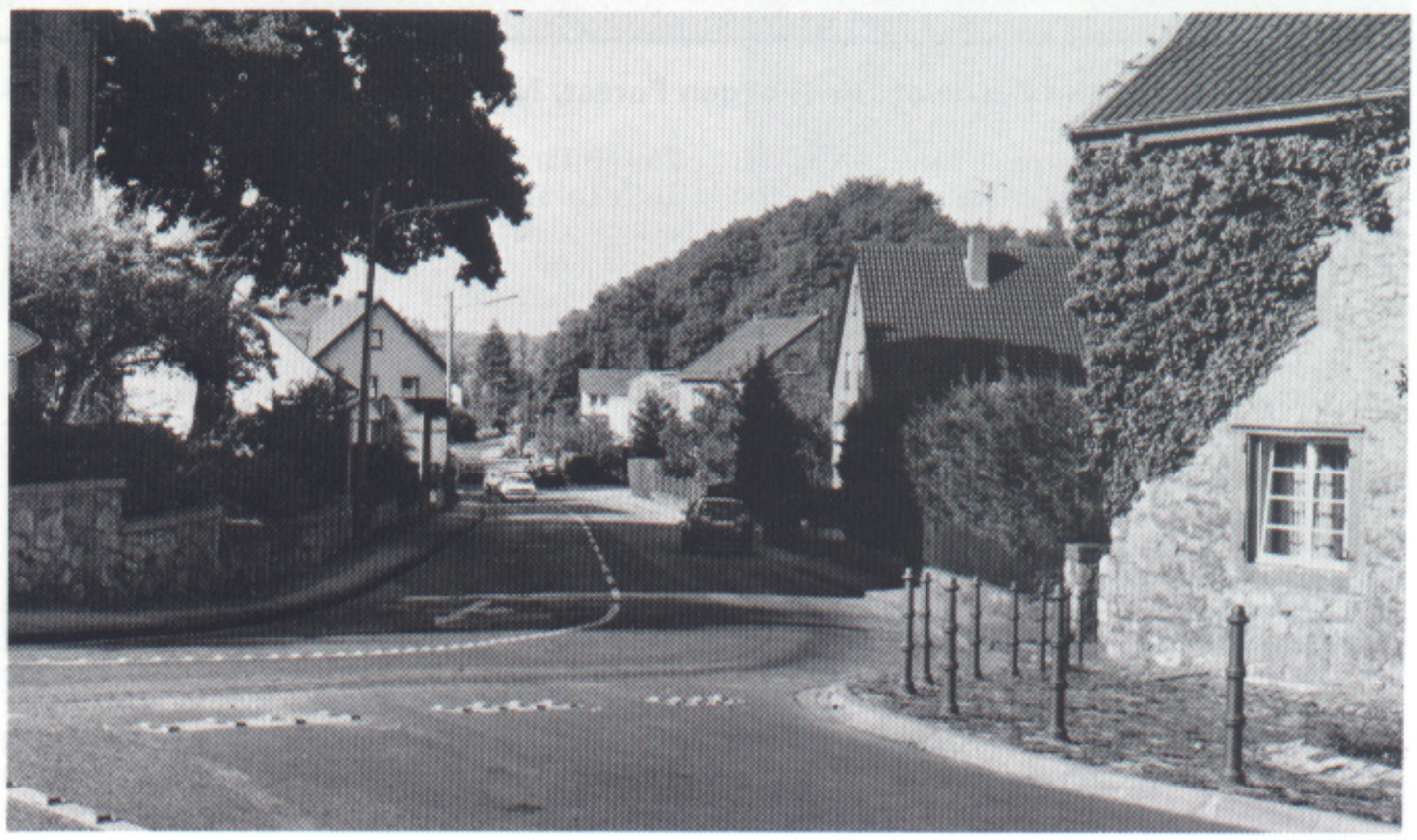
Although the 28th Division's attack across the Kall gorge was undoubtedly the most dramatic episode, if not the climax, of the whole Hürtgenwald battle, the grim fighting in the forest was to plod on for another full four miserable, bloody weeks.

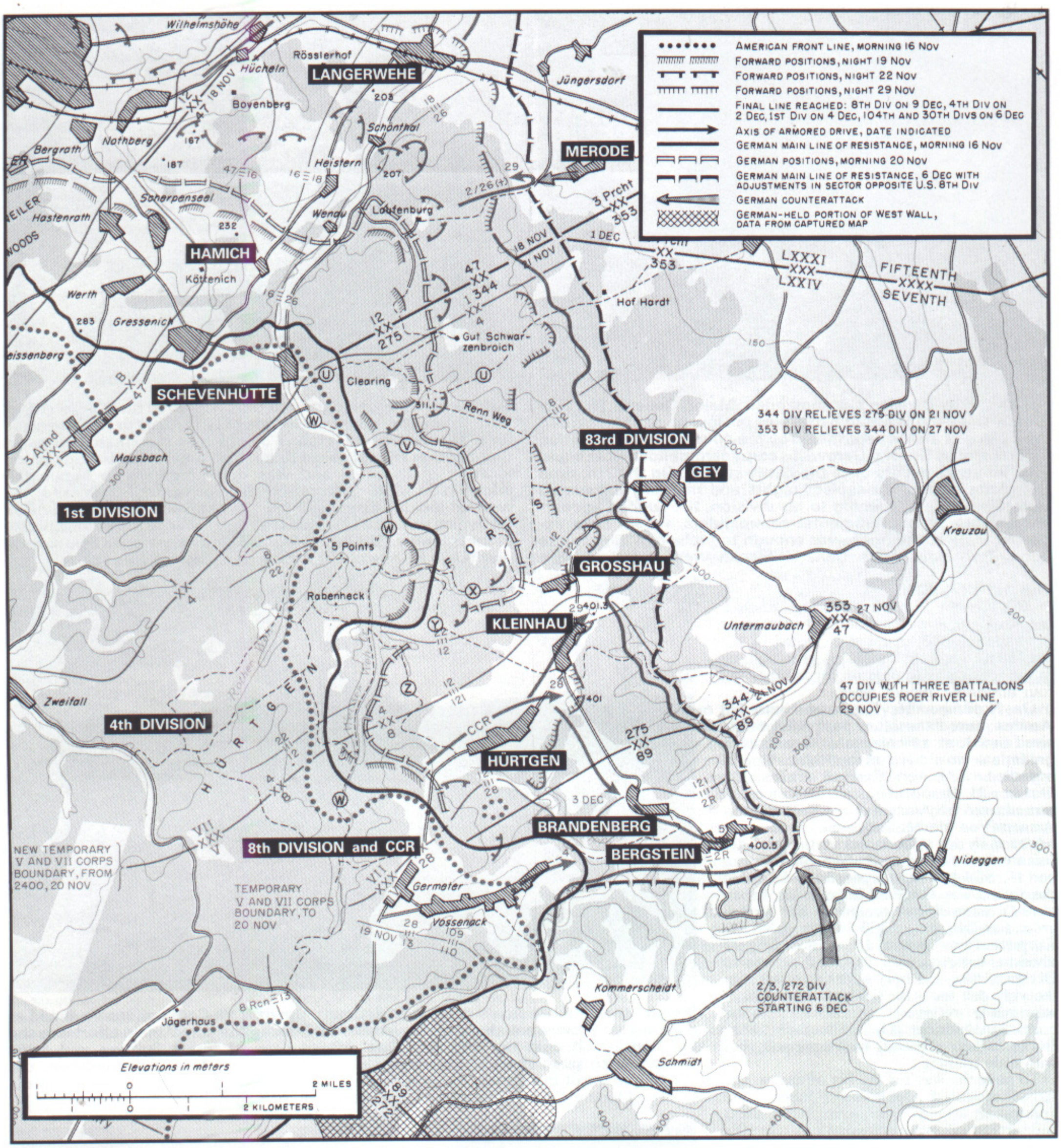
On November 16, First and Ninth US Armies started the often postponed offensive aimed at reaching the Roer, as a preliminary to a drive on the Rhine. Opposing them were two German armies. On October 23, Brandenberger's 7. Armee had turned over the Aachen sector to 5. Panzer-Armee (Von Manteuffel), which in turn was replaced by 15. Armee, under General der Infanterie Gustav von Zangen, on November 15. Still holding the northern fringe of the forest was General Engel's 12. Infanterie-Division (now renamed 12. Volksgrenadier-Division), still under LXXXI. Korps, but now part of 15. Armee. Engel's division, battered after its initial actions in October, now had only 6,400 men left. On the very day the Allied offensive started, it was being relieved by the 47. Volksgrenadier-Division (Generalleutnant Max Bork), a new division, well-equipped, but with little training.

To pave the way for the big offensive, the Allies mounted Operation 'Queen', the greatest air armada ever assembled in direct support of a ground operation. On the morning of November 16, in miraculously improving weather, 2,400 RAF and USAAF heavy bombers, 80 (out of 600 planned) US Ninth Air Force medium bombers and 350 (out of 750) fighter bombers bombed and attacked target areas in front of the two armies. In the Hürtgenwald area, Düren was flattened and Hamich and Hürtgen dive-bombed. The 47. Volksgrenadier-Division, under way to relieve the 12. Volksgrenadier-Division, was caught in the bombing and suffered heavily. Yet, although the destruction wrought was enormous, the bombing failed to soften up the German lines as much as expected.

Within First Army, the main drive was again by Collins' VII Corps with four divisions. While two divisions in the north were to clear the complex of industrial towns around Eschweiler, the two divisions in the south, the 1st and 4th, were to strike for the Roer. But to get to the Roer plain, they would still have to push on through the

Despite the 28th Division's debacle at Schmidt, the new VII Corps offensive aimed at reaching the Roer went ahead on November 16. Making the corps' main effort was the 1st Division. It cost the 'Big Red One' fifteen days of forest fighting and 4,000 casualties to push through the valley of the Wehe river from Schevenhütte, the starting point of the attack, to Langerwehe, a distance of less than four miles. This is the road leading north-east out of Schevenhütte. (US Army)





The final phase of the Battle of the Hürtgen Forest, November 16–December 9, 1944.

remaining miles of Hürtgen forest. Yet the 1st Division's attack was considered to be the corps' main effort.

The 1st Division, commanded by Major General Clarence R. Huebner, was to attack from Schevenhütte north-east through the woods to Langerwehe, less than four miles away. The axis of attack was along the Wehe valley. Through it ran a good road to Langerwehe. On the right of the valley was the forest barrier; on the left lay the wooded Hamich ridge, running parallel to the river and highway. To assist his attack, Huebner was given the 47th Infantry, which had remained at Schevenhütte when its parent 9th Division had been relieved in October.

After the aerial bombardment and an additional one-hour artillery barrage by 694 guns, the 1st Division jumped off with the 16th and 47th Infantry on the right and the 26th Infantry on the left of the highway. The 16th Infantry (Colonel Frederick W. Gibb) attacked the village of Hamich, atop the ridge and itself dominated by Hill 232 just north-west of it. Both were strongly defended by Grenadier-Regiment 48 of 12. Volksgrenadier-Division and the leading battalion was stopped short of the village. Meanwhile, on its left, the 47th Infantry had attacked Gressenich, capture of which would open a road to Hamich for tanks. After a systematic defence, the Germans abandoned the village during the night. With daylight, tanks of the 745th Tank Battalion joined the 16th Infantry, but even with their help, the infantry failed to get into Hamich. On the third day, Colonel Gibb, with tank, tank destroyer, artillery and dive bomber support, pressed the attack. In a methodical advance, clearing cellar-by-cellar, the enemy was rooted from the village. Seizing the opportunity, the Americans assaulted Hill 232. After fifteen battalions of artillery fired a massed 'time on target' on the height, the infantry took the hill.

To deal with the enemy offensive, General von Zangen had cancelled relief of the 12. Volksgrenadier-Division and assigned a Kampfgruppe from the 116. Panzer-Division, consisting of a battalion each of tanks and half-tracks, an artillery battery and an engineer company, to LXXXI. Korps' reserve. On the second day, the green 47. Volksgrenadier-Division was ordered to take over the southern half of 12. Volksgrenadier-Division's front. Its Grenadier-Regiment 104 (Oberst Josef Kimbacher) was to retake Hamich and Hill 232 with the help of the Panzer-Kampfgruppe at dawn on the 18th. Unfortunately, on its way to the assembly

The 1st Division suffered its biggest setback at a moment when it thought it had the worst behind it. Having fought all the way through the forest, two companies of the 2nd Battalion of the 26th Infantry on November 29 emerged from the trees to capture the village of Merode, only to be surrounded and annihilated by the I. Bataillon of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 5. Merode was finally captured by the 9th Division on December 13. Here troops of the 39th Infantry interrogate prisoners in the courtyard of the ruined Merode Castle. (US Army)

area, a mixed column of the Kampfgruppe lost its way in the darkness and blundered into the 16th Infantry at Hamich. Three tanks were lost before the column could extract itself. Thus alerted, the Americans shelled the enemy assembly areas and readily stopped the morning counter-attacks, leaving Grenadier-Regiment 104 decimated. Although they were to fight for another eleven miserable days to capture a nondescript collection of farms, villages, hills and industrial towns before they would reach the Roer, the 16th and 47th Infantry now had the dismal forest behind them.

Meanwhile, the 26th Infantry (Colonel John F.R. Seitz), in the forest to the right of the Wehe valley, experienced what many another unit in the Hürtgen before it had found out: inching forward, it advanced little more than a mile in three days. Then, on the 19th, it not only beat off a counter-attack by Grenadier-Regiment 115 of the 47. Volksgrenadier-Division, but in its wake advanced a full mile to reach a forest castle named Laufenburg.

Yet, for the corps' main effort, an advance of two miles in four days, against losses of some 1,000 men, was a far cry from the hoped-for breakthrough.

In order to revitalise the offensive, Huebner put in his reserve, the 18th Infantry (Colonel George A. Smith), in the centre of his line with orders to attack north-eastwards astride the Wehe Creek. Colonel Smith found the river valley blocked by a series of German strong points on both its western and eastern slope.

First was Heistern, a village perched on the slope of the Hamich ridge. The Germans there, Grenadier-Regiment 104 and the 47. Volksgrenadier-Division's engineer battalion, not only blocked the ridge, but easily denied all movement along the valley below. On the 20th, using artillery and tank fire against fortifications, the Americans captured half of the village. During the night, the Germans counter-attacked and stiff fighting followed. Only in the morning did the 18th Infantry beat off the enemy and gain the rest of the village. They had killed 250 Germans and captured some 120, but it had cost them 170 of their own men.

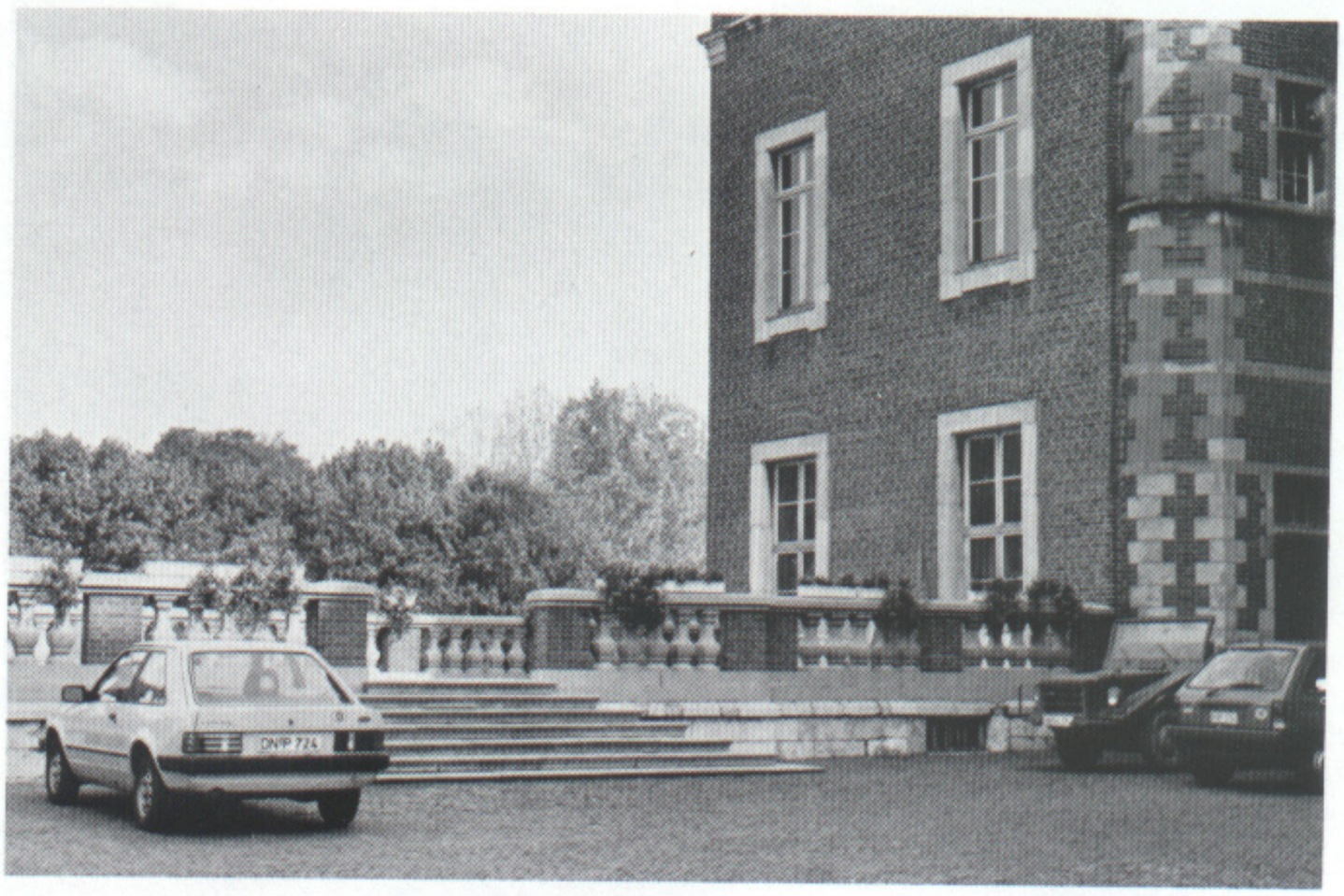
The next obstacle, on the right and about a mile further on, was Hill 207, a wooded height with a sheer cliff facing south. After a direct assault on the 21st failed with heavy losses, a battalion of the 18th was forced to make a time-consuming flanking movement through the woods, before it at last carried the hill on the 23rd.

The third obstacle, two miles closer to Langerwehe and on the same side as Heistern, was Hill 203, a bald feature with a wood in front of it. The first attack, late on the 23rd, was mown down by small arms and artillery. Tanks of the 745th, trying to come to the help of the infantry, were slowed by mud and picked off by anti-tank guns on the hill. After two days, a lone platoon gained a foothold on the hillside. Isolated for 36 hours, they clung to the crest. The main force only reached them on the 27th, driving Grenadier-Regiment 104 off the hill. By then, the stubborn 47. Volksgrenadier-Division had been virtually wiped out. In all, it had less than 300 men left. On the 24th its survivors had merged with those of the 12. Volksgrenadier-Division to form Kampfgruppe Engel. Two days later, this unit began to be relieved by the 3. Fallschirmjäger-Division (Generalmajor Karl Wadehn), composed of young paratroopers, fanatical, but green in combat. A battalion of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 9 (Oberst Helmüt von Hofmann), sent to reinforce the defenders of Hill 203, was caught in an artillery barrage and surrendered in bunches.

Finally, Langerwehe, gateway to the Roer plain, lay unshielded. By nightfall on the 28th, the 18th and a battalion of the 16th Infantry had fought their way into the town and taken it. The forest was behind them.

On their right, the 26th Infantry was still in the woods. On the 26th it had conquered the castle at Laufenburg and four hills surrounding it. Slowly pushing back Grenadier-Regiment 115 of the 47. Volksgrenadier--Division, the Americans advanced eastwards in cold rain along a trail leading out of the forest to the village of Merode. On the 28th, they reached the woods line. But their plight was not yet over. When a battalion, weakened from thirteen days in the forest, attacked Merode, it ran into unexpectedly strong resistance from a battalion of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 5 (Oberstleutnant Karl-Heinz Becker). Only two tanks could reach them, before the one trail out of the forest was blocked by a blown-up tank. Then, shielded by a thick curtain of shells, the Germans attacked the unit bottled up in Merode. Only 13 Americans escaped from the village.

This marked the end of the 1st Division's fight. Although it had reached the eastern end of the forest, the Roer river was still three miles away. In fifteen days, for an advance of not quite four miles, the 1st Division and the 47th Infantry had suffered some 4,000 battle casualties. Non-battle casualties were equally high. This made it one of the more severely hurt participants in the Hürtgen battle.



The castle is still owned by the Merode family and the present count told us that the north-west wing of the building was so heavily damaged that it had to be pulled down after the war. Only the basement and the corner tower, which joins it to the north-east wing, remain to pinpoint the comparison.

On the 1st Division's right, the 4th Division was to push through the very heart of the Hürtgen Forest. Of all the American divisions, the 4th spent the longest time fighting in the forest, 25 days. Over 2,000 of its men, one-third of its losses, fell victim to trench foot, respiratory diseases and combat exhaustion, by far the highest rate of non-battle casualties of all. *Left:* **Here, men of Company I of the division's 8th Infantry cross to the east bank of the Wehe river. Shortly, they will begin the climb of the steep slope of the Laufenburger Wald, rising on the far bank. (US Army)** *Right:* **Joaswerk T-junction, just south of Schevenhütte. New trees obscure the spot where the wooden planking bridge crossed the river.**

THE 4th DIVISION

The 4th Division, commanded by Major General Raymond O. Barton, had begun to move into the forest on November 6, taking over the line from Schevenhütte to Hürtgen, a sector four miles wide and deep into the most dense part of the forest.

Its task in VII Corps' big push was to penetrate three and a half miles of pine jungle, capture the road net about Hürtgen, Kleinhau, Grosshau and Gey, then continue across the Roer plain to Düren. To assist in taking Hürtgen, key village of the four, Barton was given Combat Command R (CCR) of the 5th Armored Division.

Opposing them was the same 275. Infanterie-Division which had withstood the 9th and 28th Divisions. By this time it had absorbed remnants of thirty-seven different units. Although badly crippled, it could still muster some 6,500 men, 106 artillery pieces, 21 assault and 23 anti-tank guns.

When the VII Corps offensive started, one of the 4th Division's regiments had already been fighting in the forest for ten days. On November 6, at the height of the 28th Division's crisis at Vossenack, the 12th Infantry (Colonel James S. Luckett) had taken over the wooded plateau north of Germeter from that division's 109th Infantry. When the 12th resumed the 109th's attack through the Weisser Weh valley and towards Hürtgen on the 8th, it soon discovered the murk and misery of forest warfare. In five days it made no noteworthy gains, while at the same time its casualties soared to 500, one-fifth of them frost-bite and trench foot cases. By that time the Germans opposing them were as exhausted and disorganised as the Americans. On the 10th a counter-attack by remnants of the 116. Panzer-Division from Hürtgen failed to achieve any penetration. Yet two, and then four companies of the 12th were surrounded. They could be extracted only one day before the new offensive started.

On November 16, the 4th Division attacked with three regiments abreast, but with large gaps between them. In the north, the 8th Infantry (Colonel Richard G. McKee) had as primary task to protect the

The same crossing site, but now pictured from the slope on the east bank. Apart from the timber planking bridge, US engineers have constructed a trestle bridge to replace the original river span blown by the Germans. (US Army) *Right:* **Looking down on Joaswerk through the foliage of the Laufenburger Wald.**

With the caption giving no other information than '803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion southwest of Düren', this picture taken on November 18 has been used to illustrate nearly every action in the Hürtgenwald, including the Kall trail. However, when we noted that its photo number follows immediately those of the Joaswerk pictures, we figured there might be a chance that it was taken near there. As one of these pictures shows an M10 driving south along the river, we tried that way first. After about 500 yards, a path off to the left led steeply into the woods. At the first hair-pin bend, we hit gold. (US Army)

flank of the 1st Division. Advancing north-east, close alongside that division's southern boundary, its objective was a clearing in the forest around a ruined monastery called Gut Schwarzenbroich, about two-thirds of the way to the forest's edge. On the first day, after climbing a precipitous slope on the east bank of the Wehe River, the leading battalion came up against a strong German position with machine guns, Schuh mines and 8-foot-high concertina wire, which would not crack. In 24 hours the battalion lost 200 men. On the third day, Colonel McKee sent a platoon each of Shermans and light tanks and three TDs up the steep hill to blast away the obstacle. With this help, the infantry not only captured the strong point, but advanced 1,000 yards beyond and penetrated a second line of defence. Here fresh German units again stopped the regiment.

In the division's centre, the 22nd Infantry (Colonel Charles T. Lanham) had an attack zone of no less than three miles wide. Its first objectives were Grosshau and Kleinhau, the two villages at the east end of the bald Hürtgen ridge. The advance was across densely-wooded precipitous ground that had no axial road whatsoever.

First obstacle after jump-off was Rabenheck (Raven's Edge) Ridge, rising between

With unit, date and location known, it is possible to identify the action. These M10s of the 803rd, attached to the 4th Division, are those sent up into the Laufenburger Forest on November 18 to blast away the German strong point which had held up the 8th Infantry for three days. With their help, the infantry captured the position and advanced a thousand yards beyond.

Its first days in the forest so badly crippled the 4th Division that it soon became apparent it would never be able to take its three assigned objectives, Hürtgen, Grosshau and Kleinhau. But even after the responsibility for Hürtgen and Kleinhau had been transferred to the neighbouring 8th Division on the 19th and the 'Ivy Division' had been allowed a two-day pause, it still needed a further eight days before it could finally secure the one remaining objective, Grosshau. By then, all that remained of the village was a heap of rubble. (US Army)

the Roter Weh and Weisser Weh creeks. Crossing this took no less than three days of exhausting and costly action. All three battalion commanders were killed by shelling. By the time the regiment had passed the bloody ridge, waded the Weisser Weh and climbed the steep slope beyond, it had incurred 300 battle casualties.

Repair of a destroyed bridge across the Weisser Weh, needed to open a supply route across the ridge, was balked by uncannily accurate shelling for two days, before the suspected German artillery observer was found and eliminated. A roundabout supply route via the 8th Infantry's sector in the north was possible if a firebreak running east of the Weisser Weh and parallel with it could be opened. But closing the gap between the two regiments took days of stiff, costly fighting. The route was not finally opened until late on the 21st. Already badly mauled, the 22nd Infantry was still a mile away from Grosshau.

Meanwhile, two miles further south, the unlucky 12th Infantry tried its best to regain the ground lost and achieve its assigned task: to secure the Germeter-Hürtgen highway so that armour could debouch against Hürtgen. The attack was a dismal failure and on the 21st, Colonel Luckett was relieved of his command.

To stem the 4th Division's first penetrations, 7. Armee had used contingents of what was left of the 116. Panzer-Division to back up the crippled 275. Infanterie-Division, but these were not enough. After a frantic search for troops, the 344. Infanterie-Division (Generalleutnant Eugen König) was rushed up from the south. It started to move in behind the 275. Infanterie-Division on the night of the 19th. Although considered of 'little combat value', in the special conditions of the Hürtgenwald, its effect was immediately apparent to the 4th Division.

By November 20, all regiments of the 4th Division were checked. Five days of attack had brought no penetration deeper than a mile and a half. Battle casualties had risen to about 1,500. Several hundred more men had been evacuated because of combat fatigue, trench foot and respiratory diseases. Replacements were less than losses. Supply routes were still inadequate. Enemy resistance had stiffened.

Obviously, something needed to be done about the 4th Division. On the 19th, First Army ordered V Corps, to the south of the 4th Division, to join the army's offensive. Also, to decrease the 4th Division's much too wide zone of responsibility, the inter-corps boundary was shifted north and the task of capturing Hürtgen and Kleinhau transferred to V Corps, leaving Barton's division the capture of Grosshau only. The division was given a two-day pause for breath.

Renewing their attacks on the 22nd, both the 8th and 22nd Infantry turned to deception. Each regiment sent one battalion on a feint attack to the east, while another battalion made the genuine attack through the woods off a flank. Both ruses succeeded. On the north wing, the 8th Infantry flanking battalion swept through 1,000 yards of forest and reached Gut Schwarzenbroich before German resistance managed to stop it. But the reserve battalion swept past to the south and reached a forest road junction from where one good road led east, to Düren, and another south-east, to Grosshau. Sending one battalion along each, the 8th Infantry advanced more than a mile in two days. In the process, the northern battalion cut in behind enemy still defending Schwarzenbroich.

With the 22nd Infantry, the battalion stealing around the enemy flank marched more than a mile without encountering one German and by nightfall had dug in only 700 yards west of Grosshau.

Meanwhile, the 12th Infantry, shifted north after its crippling fight on the Germeter plateau, tried to secure the 22nd Infantry's flank. But it was so weak that it soon lagged behind. Still, on the 25th, the 22nd Infantry, hoping to capitalise on a V Corps' armoured assault against neighbouring Hürtgen, attempted to capture Grosshau. The plan failed. Its own supporting armour was late and when at noon tanks and infantry finally ventured out of the forest into the open ground, they were met by accurate anti-tank fire and violent artillery concentrations. Three tanks were knocked out and soon the men fell back to the refuge of the woods.

By the 26th his troops were so exhausted and his regiments so understrength, that General Barton reluctantly ordered a further three-day pause. During this time he reduced the zone of action of the 8th Infantry by some 800 yards and moved the 12th Infantry to the centre to close the gap between the two other regiments. The troops however, did get a little respite from misery and enemy shelling.

While the 4th Division paused, the Germans took the opportunity to replace the 344. Infanterie-Division, finished after only eight days in the forest. The new troops came from the 353. Division, the same unit (but now renamed a Volksgrenadier-Division) that had held this sector briefly in September. Still commanded by General Mahlmann and still seriously understrength, it began relief on the 27th.

'Auf dem Hau', a quiet street in a neat little Eifel village.

A jeep of the 22nd Infantry, the unit that captured Grosshau, passes the shell-wrecked village church on what is left of Frenkstrasse. (US Army)

On the 29th, and coinciding with a V Corps offensive on adjacent Kleinhau, the 22nd Infantry renewed its attack on Grosshau. Not risking the failure of another direct attack, Colonel Lanham sent one battalion through the woods round the north with orders to cut the Grosshau-Düren road and occupy high ground behind the village. However, because V Corps in Kleinhau was getting fire from Grosshau, Lanham at noon got orders to launch a direct assault on the village as well. This attack bogged down badly, the infantry again being pinned down in the open and the armour picked off or stuck. The situation was narrowly saved at nightfall, when the flanking battalion finally cut the highway behind the village and, almost coincidentally, a group of tanks and TDs reached the stymied infantry. Soon German resistance in Grosshau collapsed, more than 100 Germans surrendering.

Next day, the 22nd and 12th Infantry reached the woods line overlooking Gey, the last village on the road to Düren. At long last, after twenty-five terrible days, the 4th Division was all the way through the Hürtgen Forest. However, on the north wing, the 8th Infantry still struggled to reach Hof Hardt, a settlement on the eastern end of the woods, but was too weakened to take it. In fact the whole division was in such a deplorable state that it could go no further. Since November 16, for a gain of three miles, it had suffered some 4,000 battle casualties and another 2,000 men lost to exposure and combat fatigue — losses only surpassed by that of the 28th Division.

On December 1, General Collins ordered Barton to halt his attacks. Six days later, he halted all offensive operations within VII Corps. The 9th Division, itself hardly recovered from its earlier stint in the forest, replaced the 1st Division and the 83rd Division took over from the 4th.

Whereas most of the other buildings at Grosshau were cleared away completely and rebuilt from the ground up, the Sankt Appolonia Church was very carefully restored to its original state.

So near and yet so far. The village of Hürtgen as seen from the Germeter highway. In between lies the deadly 'Wilde Sau' minefield which so troubled the infantry of the 9th, 28th, 4th and 8th Divisions and led to an ill-considered and untimely commitment of the 5th Armoured Division's tanks along the main road. When this picture was taken in 1948, wreckage of CCR's armour, blown off the road in the attack of November 25, still lay in the fields, some of them even with bodies in them. The danger of German glass mines, unlifted because mine detectors did not register them, was so great that the dead had still not been recovered. (US Army)

THE 8th DIVISION AND CCR, 5th ARMORED

On November 19, First Army had ordered V Corps to join the offensive, started by VII Corps three days earlier, by launching a new attack on the key village of Hürtgen. On that date, the 8th Division, under Major General Donald A. Stroh, was still in the process of relieving the tragic 28th Division. Despite the misfortunes that had earlier befallen three regiments of as many different divisions when they tried to reach Hürtgen by way of the wooded 'bloody plateau' north of Germeter, the 8th Division did not change its tactics, but tried exactly the same once more. Aim was still to reach the woods line overlooking the village, prior to 5th Armored's CCR, inherited from the 28th Division, debouching against it.

After a one-hour artillery preparation, the 8th Division jumped off on the 21st with one regiment, the 121st Infantry (Colonel John R. Jeter). The men had reached the line of departure only three hours before, after a long truck ride and a seven-mile march through strange woods, harrassed by shelling. For four brutal days, the 121st plodded on, against woods thick with mines, log bunkers bristling with automatic weapons and wire and broken trees blocking movement, enduring cold, rain and snow and absorbing alarming casualties. Daily gains varied from nothing to 600 yards. On the 24th, a company trying to drive up the Weisser Weh valley broke under the strain and fled back in panic. Colonel Jeter promptly relieved both the company and battalion commanders. Other reliefs followed. In four days, another battalion and three company commanders lost their commands. By the 25th, having lost 1,200 men, half of them to combat exhaustion, the 121st had still not gained the objective. That day, Colonel Jeter himself was relieved of his command.

To break the deadlock, General Stroh decided to commit the tanks of CCR (Colonel Glen N. Anderson). The armour was ordered to attack along the Germeter-Hürtgen higway, although the Germans still controlled the woods bordering on the left of it and the road was under observation from the Brandenberg-Bergstein ridge. Not surprisingly, the attack was a dismal failure. Starting early on the 25th, the tank column was stopped cold just outside Germeter, first by a crater in the road which had not yet been bridged, then by a mine which disabled the lead Sherman, then by a tank retriever knocked out by anti-tank fire. Meanwhile, the armoured infantry, in the column behind, was fired on by artillery, mortars and small arms, its losses rising to 150 men. With nothing accomplished, the combat command withdrew.

Next day, the 121st Infantry, now led by Colonel Thomas J. Cross, at last reached the woods line west of Hürtgen. The Germans, Heeres-MG-Bataillon 31 of the 344. Infanterie-Division, had pulled back from the woods into the village. Despite armour and artillery support, it took the 121st and a battalion of the 13th Infantry two more days of solid fighting to conquer it. About 6.00 p.m. on November 28, Hürtgen was finally in American hands.

That same day, General Stroh turned command of his division over to Brigadier General William G. Weaver. (It was no condemnation of Stroh's handling of the battle; that he needed a rest leave had been decided on some time before.) General Weaver's first act was to order CCR to

Since 1945 in the Hürtgen-Vossenack area alone, at least 32 civilians became victims of 'Minentod' — death by mines. Today, cows can graze peacefully in the fields alongside the B-399.

continue the advance next day and capture the next highway village, Kleinhau.

Next morning, after artillery and fighter bombers dropping napalm had effectively softened up the village, a CCR task force, led by Lieutenant Colonel William A. Hamberg, rolled out of Hürtgen and within 90 minutes had reached Kleinhau and cleared it. They took 55 prisoners, but themselves lost eight tanks, 13 halftracks, one TD and some 60 men.

Capture of the Hürtgen-Kleinhau ridge gave the Americans not only control of the road net to Düren, but also a bridgehead upon the commanding Brandenberg-Bergstein ridge, from which German artillery had for two months so seriously thwarted American operations. Now, the 8th Division could finally eliminate this enemy advantage by attacking south-eastward from Kleinhau, along the highway atop the spine of the ridge.

To secure a safe start line for an armoured thrust, the 121st and 28th Infantry, in three days of stiff fighting, first cleared the Tiefenbach (Deep Creek) valley on the right and the wooded slope on the left of the highway. Then, on December 2, Task Force Hamberg launched the main attack down the road to Brandenberg. About halfway, the tanks came up against a thick-laid minefield. Three Shermans blew up. Anti-tank fire hit another one. Small arms and mortar fire checked the armoured infantry. The task force had no choice but to seek cover. That night, engineers lifted no less than 250 mines.

Next morning, Task Force Hamberg, with close P-47 air support, rolled into Brandenberg. But Colonel Hamberg felt he needed more troops before he could think of taking Bergstein and especially the Burg-Berg (Castle Hill), a wooded cone rising high at the eastern end of the ridge, just beyond Bergstein. However, all units of the 8th Division were in the line and the rest of CCR had just been committed to mop up the last of Vossenack. Hamberg would have to wait.

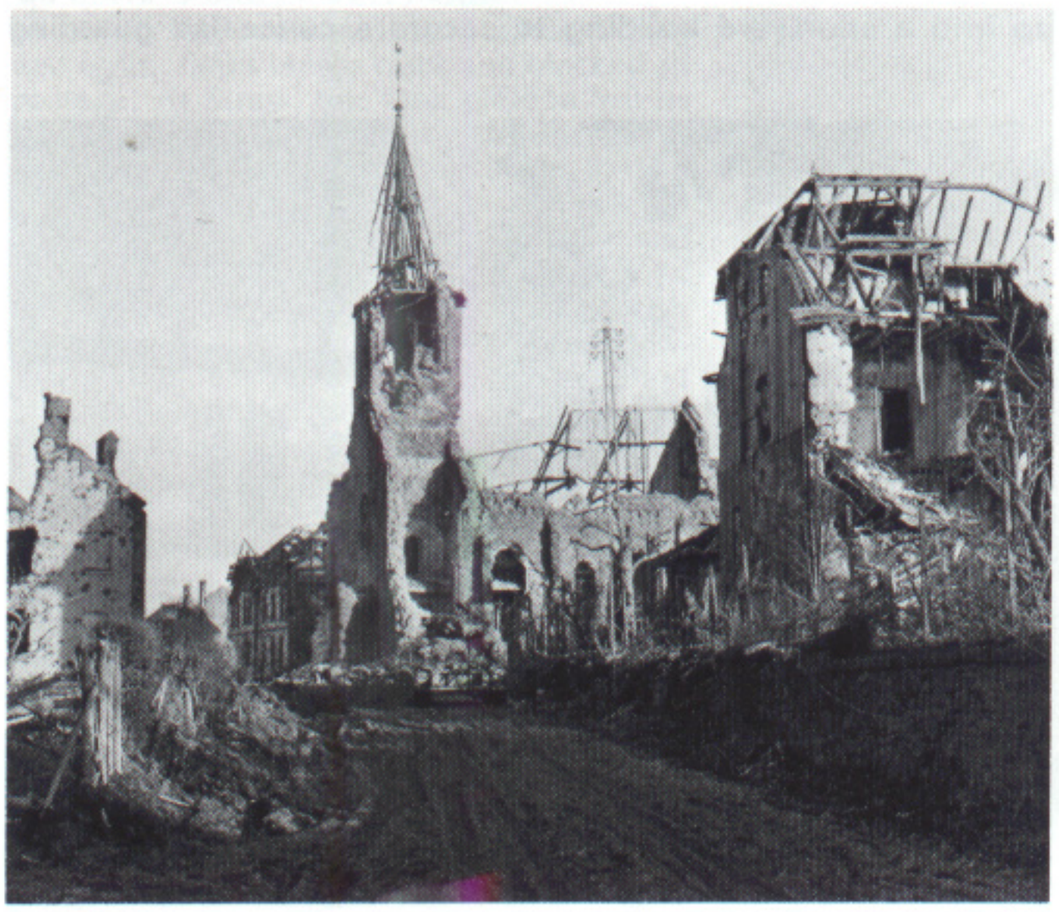
To the Germans, the enemy push to Brandenberg seemed to pose a serious threat to the Roer Dams and, for the first time in the battle, General Brandenberger gained permission to use a unit already in place for the Ardennes counter-stroke.

The 272. Volksgrenadier-Division (Oberst Georg Kosmala) was rushed north from Monschau with orders to occupy Bergstein.

The Americans won the race for Bergstein with less than half a day to spare. On the 5th, a reunited CCR struck at the village and quickly took it. Mopping up took until after

The village that gave the battle its name. Hürtgen was finally taken by the 121st Infantry Regiment and the 1st Battalion of the 13th Infantry Regiment of the 8th Division on November 28. (US Army)

The B-399 as it leads into the village from the west. This is one of the few places along the village main street where an original building can be discerned among the new houses built after the war.



Hürtgen was heavily shelled and repeatedly dive-bombed and scores of Germans were buried amid its ruins. As the late Charles B. MacDonald wrote: 'For a long time, the village would bear the terrible stench of war'. (US Army)

Left: **The men of Headquarters Company of the 121st Infantry installed themselves in a farmhouse along the main street. To them, after the gloom and misery of the forest, a roofed, warmed quarter, even one as shell-torn as this one, was the zenith of luxury. (US Army)** *Right:* **The 'Hurtgen Hotel' was located on 89 Höhenstrasse. Slightly modernised, it still belongs to the Prinz-Niessen family. The owner of 1944, Robert Prinz, was mayor of Hürtgen from 1952 to 1972.**

dark. Still, the position was far from secure. Bergstein lay open to counter-attack from almost every side and with only 16 tanks, 6 TDs and 400 tired men left, CCR was without question too weak to defend it.

Before dawn on the 6th, the 272. Volksgrenadier-Division's forward unit, Grenadier-Regiment 980 (Oberst Ewald Burian), supported by five assault guns, counter-attacked. For two hours the fight raged, but with daylight the Germans fell back. During the day, CCR repulsed two other attacks, but, so long as the Germans retained the dominating Burg-Berg, it was doubtful whether it could hold out much longer. General Weaver was so concerned about his lack of reserves that he had asked V Corps for release of the elite 2nd Ranger Battalion. Permission came on the 6th. In a night attack, the Rangers charged up the hill and took it. The Germans reacted fiercely: a hail of shells fell on the Rangers before they could dig in; twice the Germans counter-attacked. In two days, the Rangers lost 130 men, but they held their ground. On the 8th, obliged to release the 272. Volksgrenadier-Division for the counter-offensive, Brandenberger reluctantly abandoned his efforts to retake the ridge. It was the end of the fighting for the 8th Division.

Earlier, on the left wing, the 121st Infantry, after a four-day struggle through the woods, had finally reached the edge of the forest and occupied high ground overlooking the Roer. But the cost had been high: in eighteen days, the 8th Division and attachments had lost nearly 4,000 men; another 1,200 had succumbed to combat fatigue or the elements. The Hürtgen had chewed up another victim.

The 709th Tank Battalion supported the 8th Division into Hürtgen. Near the church, in the courtyard of the Forstamt (Forestry Office), one Sherman was hit and brewed up. Another has backed up into a courtyard building to secure a concealed guarding position. (US Army)

The same courtyard on Kirchstrasse today. Perhaps by necessity, the building on the left has been changed into a garage.

THE 83rd DIVISION

Now only the portion of the forest left by the 4th Division, directly in front of Düren, remained to be cleared of Germans. By December 10, the 83rd Division, commanded by Major General Robert C. Macon, had taken over this sector from the 4th. Although at the very edge of the forest, the fighting here was markedly similar to that which had occurred deep within it. On the division's right wing, the 331st Infantry (Colonel Robert H. York) was directed on Gey, the village on the main road to Düren, and the 330th Infantry (Colonel Robert T. Foster) on Strass, a village one mile further south. Capture of these would enable the 5th Armored Division to fan out onto the Roer plain. Defending both villages was the 353. Volksgrenadier-Division.

After the capture of Hürtgen, the 8th Division and the 5th Armoured Division went on to take Kleinhau and the dominating Brandenberg-Bergstein ridge. Still another division, the 83rd, was needed to conquer the last two miles of the forest fringe opposite Düren. By the second week of December, the Americans were finally through the Hürtgen and had reached the Roer plain. By then, the importance of the Roer dams had become quite obvious, but the German Ardennes offensive stopped all operations aimed at their capture. The Hürtgen campaign ended without the Allies having made any real gains.
Top: **The battle-weary of the 121st Infantry move out from Hürtgen towards Kleinhau to assist in the reduction of the Brandenberg-Bergstein ridge. (US Army)**

The attack started on December 10. A battalion of the 331st Infantry got into Gey along a dirt track from the west, but was unable to dislodge the Germans who were defending house-to-house. A battalion of the 330th reached Grass along another dirt track, but was soon counter-attacked by infantry and armour. In both villages, the Americans needed tanks. The 744th Tank Battalion sent a company to each. At Gey, both the woods track used by the infantry and the main road into the village turned out to be infested with anti-tank mines. Again and again, tanks blew a track and blocked all passage. At Strass, one tank platoon lost its way and was annihilated by the Germans, but the rest of the company made it. But after dark, the Germans cut the dirt road to Strass, in effect isolating the force there and when, next morning, armoured infantry of CCB (Colonel John T. Cole) tried to break through, the Germans stopped them cold. When after 48 hours the beleagered battalion at Strass was at last relieved after dark on the 12th, it was reduced to 150 men. Shortly before, a tank column led by a flail tank had also reached Gey. Soon both villages were free of Germans.

That day too, on the division's extreme left wing and operating on its own, the 329th Infantry (Colonel Edwin B. Crabill) attacked and took Hof Hardt, on the forest's edge. Next morning it broke out of the woods into a western suburb of Düren. Although fighting was to continue until Christmas Day, the 83rd Division and the 5th Armored had the Hürtgen Forest behind them. Though brief, its spell in the forest had cost the 83rd Division and attached units more than 1,600 men. To the last, the cruel forest had demanded a striking toll.

One of the remarkable things about taking comparisons in the Hürtgenwald is that only with the wartime picture in hand does one realise that not one of these buildings is older than 45 years. The Germans seem able to reconstruct farms and houses in such a way that it looks as if they have always been there.

Whereas no American war cemetery is located in Germany (most of their Hürtgen Forest dead lie in the cemeteries at Margraten in Holland and Henri Chapelle in Belgium), there are no less than six German war cemeteries in the Hürtgenwald area. The largest is the one at Hürtgen, along the B-399 to Germeter. Here 3,000 men lie buried, more than 500 of whom remain unidentified.

POSTSCRIPT

The dreaded battle of the Hürtgenwald was over. Six American infantry divisions and one armoured division — some 120,000 men — had fought there. In all, 24,000 Americans were killed, wounded, captured or went missing in the forest, and another 9,000 fell victim to combat exhaustion and weather exposure. All told, a casualty figure of 33,000, more than a quarter of the total force committed.

Two factors had caused the Americans to keep feeding one division after another into the Hürtgen meatgrinder: firstly, the fear that the forest might, like the Argonne Forest in the First World War, conceal an enemy assembling for a counter-attack into the flank; secondly, the continued hope that, with dwindling German reserves, one more fresh unit would do the trick.

Six German divisions, one of them armoured, had defended the forest and parts of three others had also participated. Four of them were completely destroyed, the rest ended up badly mauled. Of some 80,000 men, an estimated 28,000 had become casualties — a loss ratio even higher than that of the Americans.

What had been gained? The Americans had conquered fifty square miles of real estate of no real tactical value to future operations, and they had destroyed enemy troops and reserves, which the other side could ill afford to lose. The Germans, on the other hand, with meagre resources had slowed down a major Allied advance for three months and at the end of it, the vital Roer Dams were still in their hands. And they had won crucial build-up time for their winter offensive.

The realisation that the Roer Dams were the real prize of the forest and that they

Nearby, along the road to Simonskall, lies the Ehrenfriedhof Vossenack, where over 2,200 are interred, nearly a thousand of whom are unnamed. Buried here too, in Grave No. 1074, is Generalfeldmarschall Walter Model, whose Heeresgruppe B was responsible for the defence of the Hürtgen Forest. Model committed suicide on April 21, 1945, near Düsseldorf in the encircled Ruhr pocket, to evade his captors. *Right:* **Marienbildchen Ehrenfriedhof, about half a mile south-west of Merode. here in 1945-46 the local people collected the bodies found in the woods for burial. Later the site was taken over by the German War Graves Commission. Some 200 men, mostly young Fallschirmjäger killed fighting the 1st Division, are buried here. Two mass graves contain the remains of 70 and 14 dead. Hürtgen, Vossenack and Merode account for only 5,400 of the estimated 12,000 Germans killed in the Hürtgenwald. Others who fell in this battle lie at cemeteries at Hehlrath (188 graves), Kreuzau (118) and Kloster Mariawald (417) and at the large cemeteries at IJsselstein in Holland and Lommel in Belgium.**

In July 1981 a local enthusiast was searching the Burg-Berg (Castle Hill) area near Bergstein — the scene of heavy fighting 37 years before — when he unearthed an American steel helmet and human bones. German explosives ordnance disposal experts were called in and a complete skeleton was recovered including boots, a Combat Infantryman's Badge, a coin and identification tags. These alone were not sufficient, in official eyes, to conclusively establish the identity, so medical and dental records were checked to see if they corresponded with the named soldier. The dental chart matched those of PFC Paul Peternell of the 121st Infantry Regiment who had been reported missing in action on December 9, 1944. As there was no fighting in the area on that day, it was presumed that he lost his life on December 7. Although the next-of-kin of American casualties have the right to have remains repatriated, Paul's brother chose burial in the Ardennes Cemetery near Liége. Men of the 2nd Battalion, 13th Infantry (also of the 8th Division which had fought in the Hürtgen battles) acted as pall-bearers, color guard and firing party for the funeral.

could best be attacked from the Monschau Corridor came too late. The first such attack, launched by the 78th Division on December 13, had to be halted because of the Ardennes offensive. Schmidt and the dams had to wait. Schmidt was finally taken on February 7, 1945, by the 78th Division, in conjunction with an attack across the infamous Kall gorge by the 82nd Airborne Division. The 9th Division captured the Urft Dam on February 4 and the 78th Division the Schwammenauel Dam on the 9th. However, at both, the Germans had blown the discharge valves, thereby creating a long-lasting flood in the Roer valley. The Ninth US Army, poised for crossings of the river downstream, was forced to postpone its assault for twelve days — a forceful reminder that the dams, and not the river, should have been the target of the 1944 attacks.

And the bereaved. Forty years after her son, Jack, (12th Infantry, 4th Division), had been killed at Hürtgen on November 25, 1944, his mother, Mrs Velma Taliaferro, aged 90, made the long journey from Duncan, Oklahoma, to Margraten to visit his grave for the first time her life. (Henk Magnee)

To our mind, the Hürtgenwald remains one of the best-preserved battlefields in north-west Europe today. By far the most fascinating action to study, because of the unorthodox terrain it was fought over, the drama of the battle and the traces it left in the landscape, is the 28th Division's attack across the Kall gorge and for this reason we have described this operation in greater detail than those of other divisions.

But the present-day visitor can find much more of interest. Most of the Siegfried Line bunkers within the forest remain, albeit blown and collapsed, and although the German authorities strive to clear up bunkers and dragon's teeth elsewhere along the border, we are told that, in the Hürtgen, the remains will be left as they are.

What makes the Hürtgen even more fascinating is that it is relatively easy to find whole groups of foxholes and dugouts among the fir trees, clearly pointing out entrenched positions and illustrating the tactical value of hills and ridges, firebreaks and woods lines. Metal detecting is officially 'verboten' in the entire forest area (there is a fine if one is detected), but it is quite easy to find items of equipment such as mess tins, entrenching shovels, helmets, gas masks, sometimes even weapons without one. After the war, tons of mines, shells and ammunition remained behind in the woods and, although huge forest fires in the summer of 1947, themselves often triggered off by self-igniting phosphorous shells, caused many to explode, cleaning-up operations continued for many years. Yet the ground still hides a fair amount of live ammunition, mortar bombs and grenades and readers can never be warned too often of the great risk of touching anything suspicious.

Apart from the war cemeteries and a monument of the 116. Panzer-Division, next to the Vossenack cemetery, there are few memorials to the battle. There is, however, a small museum dedicated to the Hürtgen battle at Kleinhau with an interesting collection of vehicles, uniforms and numerous items found on the actual battlefield.

BATTLEFIELD TOUR

The Battle of Hürtgen Forest, together with the Battle for Aachen (issue 42), will be the theme of a special *After the Battle* battlefield tour from September 14 to 18 with our author, Karel Margry, as your guide. For further details contact: Major and Mrs Holts' Battlefield Tours, Golden Key Building, 15 Market Street, Sandwich, Kent CT13 9DA. Tel: 0304 612248, Fax: 0304 614930.

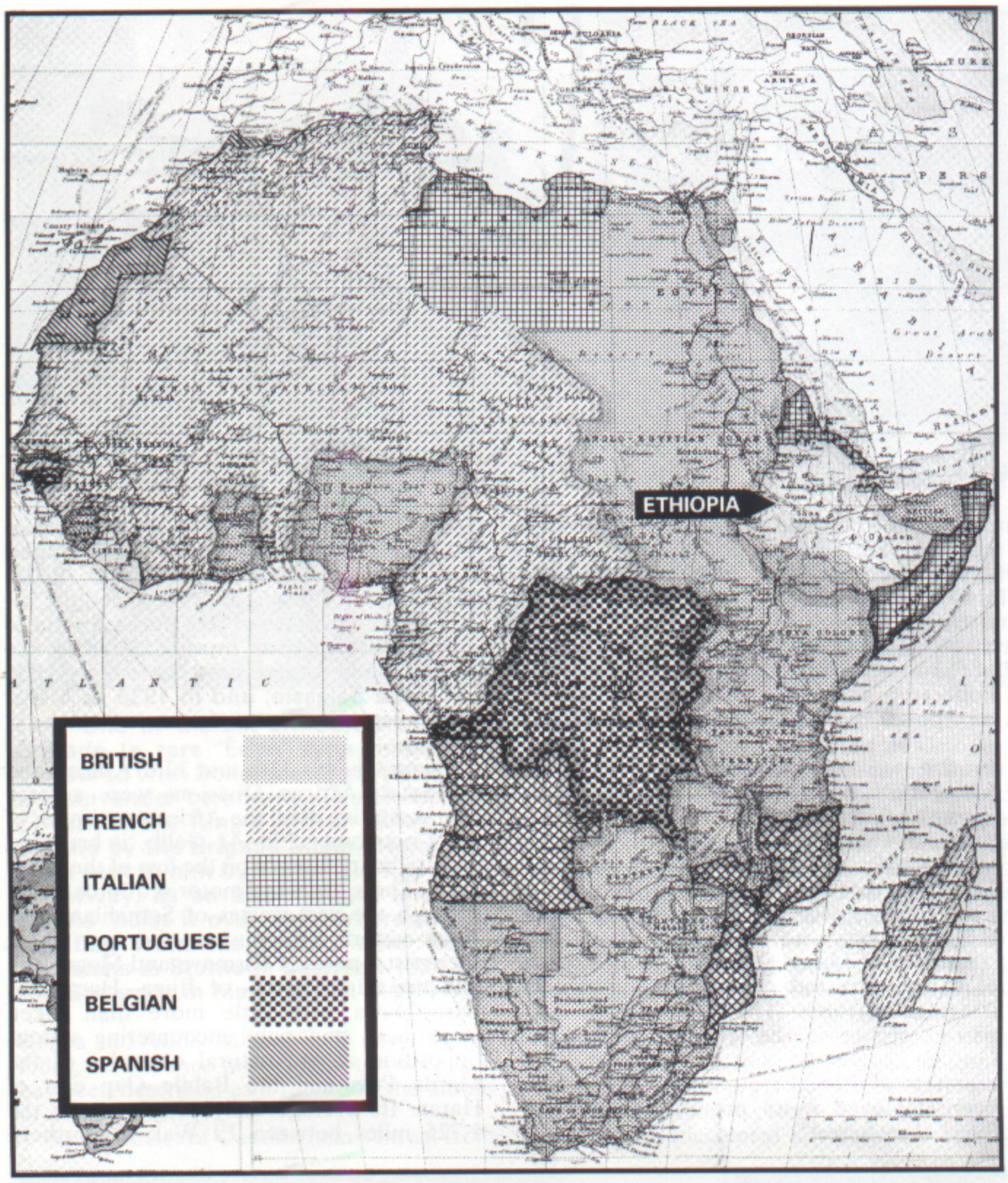
THE LIBERATION OF ADDIS ABABA

By STEPHEN BELL

The surrender of Addis Ababa to Lieutenant-General A. C. Cunningham's East Africa Force came about without a shot fired in its defence. On the morning of April 6, 1941 the first that the city's astonished inhabitants saw of its new occupiers, poised from the evening before on the southern outskirts in readiness to enter and take the surrender, was the press corps. A motley collection of fourteen battered cars and trucks that had somehow survived the eight weeks' advance from Kenya, across 2,000 gruelling miles of desert and scrubland, groaned up the city's steep streets towards the 'Little Ghebbi', the Viceroy's palace. Reporters, photographers and film crews, the improbable vanguard of a victorious army, were in town ahead of the combatants so as to be fully prepared to record a historic moment, for propaganda as well as for history: the formal surrender of the capital of Mussolini's vast but short-lived empire in the Horn of Africa.

The East African campaign, although undeniably successful, is seen as a side-show within the wider struggle across the globe and is consequently accorded little prominence in general accounts of the war. But in strategic and material terms, the extinction of Italian military power in East Africa, consummated nearly seven months after the fall of Addis Ababa when General Nasi's 22,000 troops surrendered at Gondar on November 27, brought with it considerable dividends for the Allied cause. The Suez Canal was now secure from a southern attack, and both the Red Sea section of the sea route to the East and British naval dominance of the Indian Ocean were made safe from Italian interference. Large numbers of British and Commonwealth forces in Kenya and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan were freed for service in other theatres, and valuable supplies of ammunition, guns and other weapons fell into British hands. And not least was a political bonus at a comparatively early stage in the war, a welcome boost to morale at home in the year following Dunkirk and the retreat from Europe, when the prospect of victory seemed elusive, and

The first to be free. The first country to be attacked by the Axis powers — Ethiopia in 1935 — was also the first country to be liberated in 1941. *Top:* **Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie was pictured entering the garden at his Legation at No. 6 Princes Gate, London, on June 4, 1936 with his son, Crown Prince Asfa Wossen, and daughter, Princess Tsahai, at the beginning of his five-year exile in Britain.** *Above:* **When the Legation moved to No. 17 in the early 1970s, the old building was demolished and replaced by the glass-fronted building in the centre.**



At the time it was seized, Ethiopia (also then known as Abyssinia) was the only independent country in Africa (barring Liberia on the western seaboard). Germany had lost its East, South-West and West African territories after the First World War, leaving the huge continent split between six players: Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal, Italy and Spain. Mussolini launched his brutal and ruthless invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935.

when it seemed that the struggle might continue for interminable years ahead.

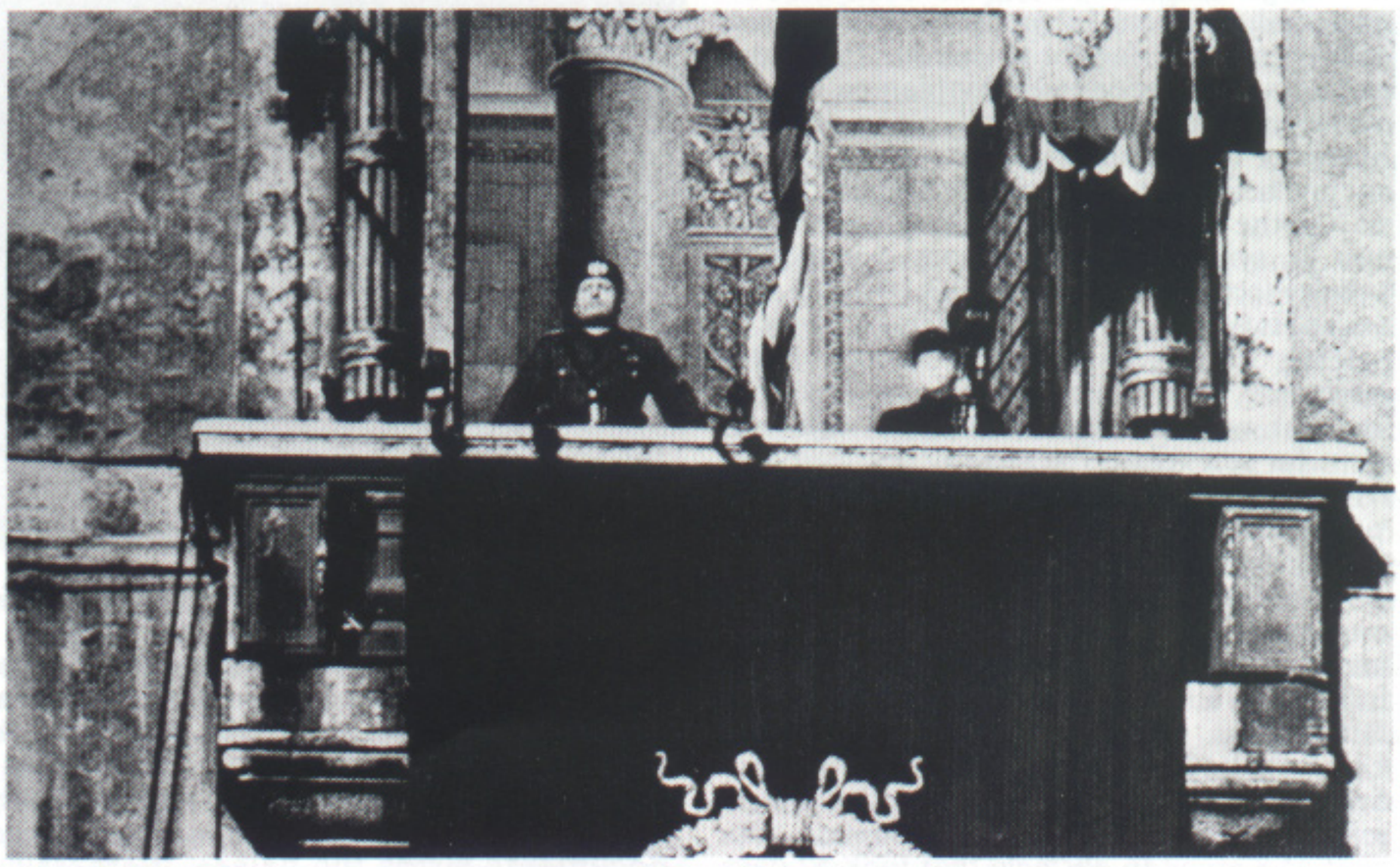
But there is more to the East African campaign than this, for in it we can see something of a rare historical symmetry. Mussolini's East African empire was the first Axis territory to fall to the Allies in the war. The Ethiopians, the first to be freed, were the first to have been enslaved when the Italian and German dictators embarked upon a territorial expansionism in the mid-1930s that thwarted the international peace-keeping machinery of the League of Nations and led the world to war before the decade was out. Ethiopians may contend, with good reason, that the opening shots of the Second World War were fired in December 1934, nearly five years before Hitler marched into Poland, when an Ethiopian patrol clashed with a strong Italian force at Walwal, a remote cluster of wells in the Ogaden Desert sixty miles within the border with Italian Somaliland.

Italy's designs on Ethiopia, the only region of Africa free from European control, were of long standing. The last attempt to annex the country by force had ended in a catastrophic defeat at the hands of Menelik II's armies at Adua in 1896. Forty years later, Mussolini, who was concerned to stem the eroding popularity of his twelve-year-old dictatorship, sought glory in foreign conquest; he engineered the Walwal incident into the pretext he needed to implement his own plans to acquire Ethiopia, large but almost defenceless, and wedged between the already established colonies of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland.

The chancelleries of Europe rang with alarm as the Italian dictator played upon fears of another world war, perhaps more terrible than the last. He was deaf to appeals for compromise, or for a peaceful settlement of his dispute. In October 1935, after the end of the highland rains, he unleashed the arsenal of a modern industrial state whose economy was now geared to full war production. Haile Selassie's barefoot warriors defended their ancient mountain kingdom with incredible bravery, but with little more than spears and vintage rifles. The toll upon innocent lives, villagers in the path of the invasion, was immense. Mustard gas, prohibited under the Geneva Conventions, was used extensively. Even the Red Cross was attacked.

Public opinion in Britain and France was outraged at the naked aggression by one member state of the League against another but was not matched by the deeds of their governments. 'Realpolitik' appeared to dictate acquiescence, alongside ritual statements of denunciation, in the hope that Mussolini could be kept from an alliance with Hitler, already feared as a menace to the peace of Europe. The invocation of Article 16 of the League's Covenant, exhorting collective economic sanctions against Italy, significantly omitted oil from the embargo, a commodity which might have grounded all of the Regia Aeronautica's squadrons and stopped the heavily motorised columns in their tracks well before the oft-declared objective of Addis Ababa could be reached. In December Sir Samuel Hoare, the British Foreign Secretary, resigned after a public outcry when proposals for a partition of Ethiopia concocted with Pierre Laval, his French counterpart, and which both governments sought to impose upon Haile Selassie, were leaked to the press.

Mussolini, anyway, was in no mood to be appeased with less than Ethiopia in its entirety. His brutal juggernaut pushed deeper into the country and entered Addis Ababa on May 6, 1936. Haile Selassie meanwhile had escaped. He was granted asylum in England by Baldwin's embarrassed government, and was to take up an impecunious exile in Bath, while vigorously and continuously promoting his country's cause. On May 9, a bombastic Mussolini stood on the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia in Rome. To a vast and exultant crowd in the square below, he proclaimed Vittorio Emmanuele III the new Emperor of Ethiopia and the inauguration of a new Roman Empire of which a reinvigorated Italy could be proud.



After a seven-month campaign to reach the Ethiopian capital, Mussolini proclaims the annexation of the country by Italy in a speech from the balcony of his palace in the Piazza Venezia, Rome, on May 9, 1936. (Associated Press)

Although the League of Nations (forerunner of the United Nations) imposed sanctions against Italy in October 1935 for its aggression against Ethiopia, they were ineffective in constraining Mussolini. As an indication of public opinion, the League of Nations Union in Britain had conducted an informal referendum the previous June when 10 million respondents (out of 11½ million) supported economic sanctions, and of these 6¾ million supported war, to uphold the principle of collective security. Sanctions were lifted in July 1936, despite an appeal by Haile Selassie in person in the League's main chamber in Geneva two weeks earlier. *Left:* **The Albergo Imperiale, seen here ringed with barbed wire, was the principal hotel in the Capital. (IWM)** *Right:* **Changed only in name, the hotel remains a delight for the traveller in search of the atmosphere of the Addis Ababa of a bygone age. It dates from 1907 and is immortalised in the writings of Evelyn Waugh who stayed here twice, in 1930 during the coronation of Haile Selassie, and in 1936 as a war correspondent during the invasion.**

Five grim years followed for Ethiopians. But the invader's grip was far more tenuous than it seemed, through tight censorship of news of events inside the country, to the outside world. With unseemly haste, economic sanctions against Italy were lifted and Mussolini's new acquisitions were formally recognised. The occupation was only properly effective in the heavily garrisoned towns, in rural areas set aside for settlement by immigrants from Italy, or where local rulers could be induced to collaborate. Savage suppression of a spirited people with a long tradition of independence was counter-productive. Bands of 'patriots', by which name the Ethiopian resistance groups came to be known, roamed at large to harry the numerous but overstretched forces of occupation.

Mussolini's ill-judged decision to enter the war on Hitler's side in June 1940 sealed the fate of his forces in the Horn of Africa. These were large and in possession of vast stockpiles of hardware, and they marched into Britain's sparsely populated Somaliland Protectorate, deemed indefensible by its garrison which nevertheless inflicted heavy losses on the invaders before being evacuated to Aden, and the Sudanese border town of Kassala. The Italian forces were beyond the range of effective reinforcement either from Italy or from Libya, her other African colony; and the failure to subdue the widespread and burgeoning Ethiopian resistance movements emasculated all plans to take Kenya or the Sudan. Italy's new status as an enemy belligerent transformed Haile Selassie, in the eyes of the British government, into a symbol around whom anti-Italian activity could rally within his former domains. It is tempting to view Britain's part in helping Ethiopians to recover their independence as an act which, although coincident with the British national interest, went far to expiate the shabby betrayal of a friendly nation during the inglorious 'appeasement' years.

In early 1941 Italy's East African territories came under attack from a giant pincer movement. Its southern arm was Cunningham's East Africa Force, advancing north from Kenya. Its northern arm, the 4th and 5th Indian Divisions under Lieutenant-General W. Platt, entered Eritrea from the Sudan. In January it encountered a determined Italian defence of the mountain pass west of Keren, an obstacle that took 52 days of fighting to overcome. The loss of the town, on March 27, was a fatal blow to Italian morale and Platt, helped by the Free French, went on to take the rest of Eritrea with little further blood-letting before moving south, later to link up with Cunningham's forces at Amba Alagi. Between the two arms of the pincer, Haile Selassie entered Ethiopia from the Sudan with a force of Ethiopian exiles and Sudanese troops led by British officers who were under the overall command of Major Orde Wingate, a figure of controversy but a brilliant exponent of irregular warfare. These linked up with patriot groups in the western province of Gojjam, harassing and tying down large numbers of Italian troops who might have been deployed more productively for defence elsewhere.

Cunningham's 11th and 12th African and 1st South African Divisions were a force representative of all the African territories of the Commonwealth. At Gelib, it breached stiff Italian resistance on the line of the River Juba. Thereafter, the motorised force swept through the vast wastes of Somaliland and south-eastern Ethiopia, on the way taking the coastal ports of Kismayu and Mogadishu and the inland towns of Jijiga, Harar and Dire Dawa with little more than token opposition, and only encountering serious opposition at the natural obstacles of the Marda Pass and the Babile Gap east of Harar. Its average daily progress over the 1,725 miles between El Wak in northern

The 'Little Ghebbi', the palace of Haile Selassie, which had been completed in 1934, was taken over by the Italian Viceroy after the occupation. The first incumbent, Marshal Graziani, was standing on the steps of the portico on February 19, 1937, when an abortive attempt was made on his life. The Italians reacted savagely, slaughtering thousands in the city over the next three days. This picture was taken on the surrender of Italian forces on April 6, 1941. The Union Flag is ready for hoisting as soon as General Wetherall, commanding the 11th African Division, and General Mambrini, Inspector-General of the Italian East African Police, emerge after signing the surrender documents inside the palace. Wetherall's car is drawn up outside the entrance with the Italian Guard of Honour on the left. The spiral stairway in the foreground, winding upwards around the flagpole, is an Italian monument to Fascism, each of its steps representing one year since Mussolini came to power in 1922. (IWM)

Left: **One of the six armoured cars of the 22nd East African Brigade (a rare 'Edye' type manufactured locally in Kenya, armoured with boiler plate) provided a modest show of force at the surrender ceremony. The Union Jack, held solemnly by a private of the King's African Rifles, was produced at the last minute by the Brigade Major, Major M. W. Biggs. The flag had been sent to him by his wife in Kenya, while the campaign was underway, as an afterthought and with the request that he should 'hoist it over somewhere for me'. Biggs had inherited the flag from his father, who flew it during ceremonial occasions in Bermuda between 1924 and 1926 while acting for the Governor in his absence. (IWM)** *Right:* **The flag remains in the family, after further adventures. After Addis Ababa, it was hoisted at Gondar, where the last Italian forces in East Africa surrendered in November. Subsequently, Biggs took it with him to Burma and it flew over the largest pagoda at Kalewa during the Japanese retreat over the Chindwin in early 1945. Brigadier Biggs kindly showed the flag to the author and allowed it to be photographed. The holes are the work of moths, not bullets. (Biggs himself was not witness to the ceremony at the palace. Upon entering Addis Ababa, his orders were to peel off with a company of the King's African Rifles to take the airport, where he found 1,200 fully-armed Italian air force troops under a General waiting to surrender.)**

Kenya and Addis Ababa, in 53 days, was 33 miles, an advance into enemy territory that has been described as a record in the annals of military history.

At the outset of Cunningham's thrust from Kenya, Addis Ababa was an undreamed of prize, as indeed was the rapid collapse altogether of Italian power in East Africa. In early 1941, Cunningham's objectives were limited to a piecemeal advance into enemy territory, a caution in planning that was dictated by the fact of an opponent greatly superior in men and material. But everyone — from Wavell (the Commander-in-Chief Middle East) and Cunningham down to unit commanders — was taken by surprise at the speed with which the Italian defences on the southern front had collapsed. When Dire Dawa fell on March 29, the visible evidence of a rapidly disintegrating opposition convinced Cunningham that Addis Ababa, 290 miles to the west, was within his grasp. Wavell, desperate for more troops to face an imminent attack from the Afrika Korps in the Western Desert, remained to be persuaded. 'The occupation of Addis Ababa would confront us with an embarassment of very large numbers of Italian civilians and would have no great strategical object', he wrote. But there was a shortage of shipping to transfer troops to Egypt, and he authorised Cunningham to proceed upon an assurance that no serious opposition was foreseen.

The Duke of Aosta, Viceroy of Italian East Africa, had meanwhile received unequivocal orders from Mussolini to hold out in Ethiopia with all available resources until Axis forces had wrested Egypt from British control and re-opened the supply lines to East Africa. There was, however, no question of a stand at Addis Ababa, a sprawling city in a wide bowl ringed by mountains and virtually indefensible. There was also the matter, touched upon by Wavell, of the city's Italian civilians, feared at risk by a supposedly vengeful Ethiopian population. The cause for this unease was the ruthless subjugation that Ethiopians had undergone at the hands of their oppressors over the last five years; more specifically, the city authorities feared retaliation for the 'Addis Ababa massacres' which had followed an attempt to assassinate the Viceroy, Marshal Graziani, in February 1937, when at least 3,000 defenceless Ethiopians (and possibly several times that number) were murdered in cold blood by rampaging Blackshirt gangs over the ensuing three days.

After Haile Selassie returned to his liberated Capital on May 5, 1941, Britain still regarded Ethiopia as a conquered Italian colony and it was not returned to the Emperor's full authority until agreements were concluded in January 1942 and December 1944. A further iniquity was that because the country had been removed from official maps as a free country ever since 1936, it was not accorded full rights in post-war peace negotiations. Britain retained the Ogaden until 1948. Eritrea remained under a British military administration until 1952, when it was attached to Ethiopia in a federated form following a United Nations referendum; it was fully united in 1962. Haile Selassie was deposed in 1974 and his former palace now houses the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University. Mature hedges flanking the main entrance, a fresh coat of paint and the replacement of the fascist adornments on the freize of the balcony with the lions of Ethiopia, are other discernable changes.

The day following the surrender the 1st Transvaal Scottish Regiment staged a victory march at the lower end of town although this was more for the newsreels at home than to impress the inhabitants of the city. Sporting tam-o'shanters and red hackles, and preceded by a band playing *The Atholl Highlanders*, they are about to leave the square in front of the railway station and march down Viale Mussolini. (IWM)

Construction of the single-track railway line from the Red Sea port of Djibouti was begun by a French company in 1897 but did not reach Addis Ababa (founded by Menelik II in 1887) until 1917. The station building, though only dating from 1929, has a flavour of *fin-de-siecle* French provincial railway architecture. A massive red flag in steel, permanently unfurled and with the hammer and sickle motif and the five-pointed star of Communism, proclaims the ideological hue of post-Haile Selassie Ethiopia, along with the portraits of Lenin, Marx and Engels over the main entrance.

At the urging of his Chief-of-Staff, the Duke of Aosta left Addis Ababa with a sizeable force on the evening of April 3 to join General Frusci in the mountainous terrain to the north. He placed General Mambrini, Inspector-General of Police, in charge of the city and instructed him to take steps for its occupation by the British 'with all possible speed'. Thus the British entry into Addis Ababa came to be welcomed, in a curious way, by both the liberated and the vanquished.

But in pure military terms, the fate of Addis Ababa was decided at the Awash Gorge 140 miles to the south-east, the last natural obstacle and the last line of defence in the way of Cunningham's drive towards the city. At dawn on April 3, the King's African Rifles, supported by the 22nd Indian Mountain Battery, forced a crossing and turned the flank of the Blackshirts, machine-gunners of the Savoy Grenadiers, and colonial troops dug in on the west bank. The battle for the village of Awash, less than a mile west of the gorge, lasted through the day and into the next morning, when most of the remaining defenders who had evaded capture withdrew towards the Rift Valley lakes in the south. At dawn that day the South African Air Force had also raided the airport at Addis Ababa and destroyed 32 aircraft of the Regia Aeronautica. Control of the air was assured. The road to Addis Ababa, over rolling country rising gently up to 8,000ft above sea level, was wide open.

Evidence of the Italian authorities' concern for the British to occupy the city as soon as possible was not long in coming. Six armoured cars belonging to 22nd East African Brigade had been dragged across the gorge, 200ft deep, the night before, an operation involving block and tackle and the muscle-power of more than 200 askaris of the King's African Rifles pulling on ropes. At dawn on April 5, the cars set off westwards towards Addis Ababa, soon to be pursued by more of the brigade's vehicles, crossing the river over a box-girder bridge constructed overnight by South and East African engineers on the remains of one demolished by the Italians before the battle. A bare thirty miles further on the column encountered an Italian staff car, flying a white flag and followed by an armoured car and a posse of police motor cycles. The staff car was carrying Major de Fabritis, sent out from Addis Ababa to request that the city be entered and occupied with all possible speed.

An element of comedy enters the 'race to Addis Ababa', the final phase of Cunningham's advance. Brigadier C. C. Fowkes, commanding the 22nd Brigade (and known affectionately as 'Fluffy' to the officers in his command), had vowed earlier that his East African troops deserved, and would have, the honour of being the first to enter the Capital. After the Awash crossing, he was well-placed to achieve this. Not only was he well to the fore of rival brigades, he had prudently ensured beforehand that his transport had enough petrol to cover the distance; and there was now the unlooked for advantage of an Italian military escort to speed him on towards his goal.

However, higher political considerations intervened, not that Fowkes was one to allow them to deter him from his purpose if this were possible. It had been the express wish of the South African Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, that his country's troops should be the first to enter Addis Ababa. South Africa

had entered the war on Britain's side without the almost unanimous backing of public opinion enjoyed by the governments of the other Commonwealth Dominions, and some elements of the Afrikaner majority of the white population were vigorously pro-Axis; a victory that could be presented as a South African achievement might go far in unifying the home public.

Fowkes's convoy and escort sped ahead, through villages where every single inhabitant seemed to turn out to cheer the liberators on, stopping only briefly to disarm Banda units drawn up on the roadside. A signal, personally directed for the attention of Fowkes, arrived from General Wetherall, Divisional Commander. It asked him to halt and allow the 1st South African Brigade to pass through. In a supremely Nelsonian gesture, Fowkes radioed back that the signal had become jumbled in transmission and was incomprehensible. Anticipating another message from Division HQ, this time brought by a motor cycle despatch rider, he ordered his rear party to allow no one to pass up the column 'in the interests of security'. He was only thwarted at Akaki, within sight of Addis Ababa ten miles away. A Harte-beest flew low over the column and dropped a message bag that just missed the bonnet of his car, orders that this time could not be ignored. The brigade halted for a cold and uncomfortable night to await the arrival of Wetherall.

As it happened, Cunningham decided that as representative a force as could be mustered should have the honour of occupying the Capital. Wetherall entered mid-morning on the 6th, accompanied by Fowkes, Pienaar of the 1st South African Brigade and Small-wood of the 23rd Nigerian Brigade. They were escorted by one of the East African armoured cars, flying a flag which was the personal property of the Brigade Major, Major M. W. Biggs. The signing of the surrender, with General Mambrini, was brief and business-like. The Italian flag was hauled down. The Union Jack was raised, and in its turn replaced by the green, yellow and red Ethiopian flag that afternoon.

The collapse of the remainder of Italian East Africa was not long in coming. The Duke of Aosta, under siege from a combined Ethiopian, Indian and South African force at the natural fortress of Amba Alagi, 400 miles north of Addis Ababa, surrendered on May 16. The last of the widely scattered armies in the south and the west held out until early July. In the north-west, the Italian and colonial troops under General Nasi fell back into a cordon around the old Capital of Gondar, where they were besieged by patriot groups through the rainy season, to be joined by the 12th African Division, under the command of Major-General (since promoted) Fowkes. The Italian flag was lowered for the last time from the highest tower of the imposing 300-year-old palace of Emperor Fasil on November 27; seven years, less a few days, after Mussolini's disastrous adventure had begun at the wells of Walwal.

Haile Selassie returned to his Capital on May 5, almost five years to the day after it was entered by the troops of Marshal Badoglio who had taken seven months to fight their way south from Eritrea. The reinstated Emperor was magnanimous in victory. Many Italians, who had arrived as colonists under their government's settlement schemes, remained after the liberation and ran essential services needed for the drive to modernise the country after the fighting was over. Haile Selassie's reign, already long, continued for another 33 years and saw him emerge as a leading Third World figure and a founder of the Organisation for African Unity. It ended when he was deposed in September 1974. He died a few months later, the last incumbent of a 2,000-year-old dynasty which claimed its origins in the biblical visit of the Queen of Sheba to the court of King Solomon at Jerusalem.

The author visited Addis Ababa in 1984 to attend the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (many of whose proceedings were conducted in the room in the 'Little Ghebbi' where the surrender documents had been signed nearly 44 years before). He was in Ethiopia at a time when the combined tragedies of famine and civil war, to the north, had placed the country in the forefront of world concern.

He visited the cemetery, immaculately maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission on the western outskirts of Addis Ababa, which contains the graves of the men of Cunningham's force who died in the advance north from Kenya. A soldier serving in that brief campaign who returned today would find solace in the perpetual commemoration, here, of his comrades-in-arms. And wandering around the city, he would find that the spectacular expansion and development of the post-war years has left its older quarters largely intact, a reassurance of continuity in an age of rapid change.

From March 24–April 7, 1991, Stephen Bell will lead a 50th anniversary tour to Addis Ababa and other parts of Ethiopia which featured in the 1941 campaign. For details contact Classic Tours, Kent House, 87 Regent Street, London W1R 8LS. Tel: 071-434 1551.

The march of the Transvaal Scots' proceeds down the Viale Mussolini. The blocks of offices and flats in the middle distance are of recent Italian construction (1937), and beyond are large groves of the now ubiquitous eucalyptus, introduced at the turn of the century, which still provide Addis Ababa with its major source of fuel. (IWM)

Addis Ababa's building boom of the 1960s and early 1970s, brought to an end with the 1973 oil crisis, has wrought great changes to the appearance of the lower end of Churchill Road. The name of one of the city's major thoroughfares, honouring a well-known anti-Communist, has endured since the Marxist regime came to power in 1974, a tribute above ideology to the still-valued links with Britain. The car in the foreground is a working relic of the years of the Italian occupation: a Fiat Coloniale manufactured in 1936 with high ground clearance and other special features designed for the rough roads of Africa. Its owner is Signor Stefano Beniamino, who stands alongside and who kindly drove the author around Addis Ababa in it. He arrived as a settler in the early years of the occupation and has chosen to remain ever since.

CARINHALL REVISITED

By COURTNEY S. WEST

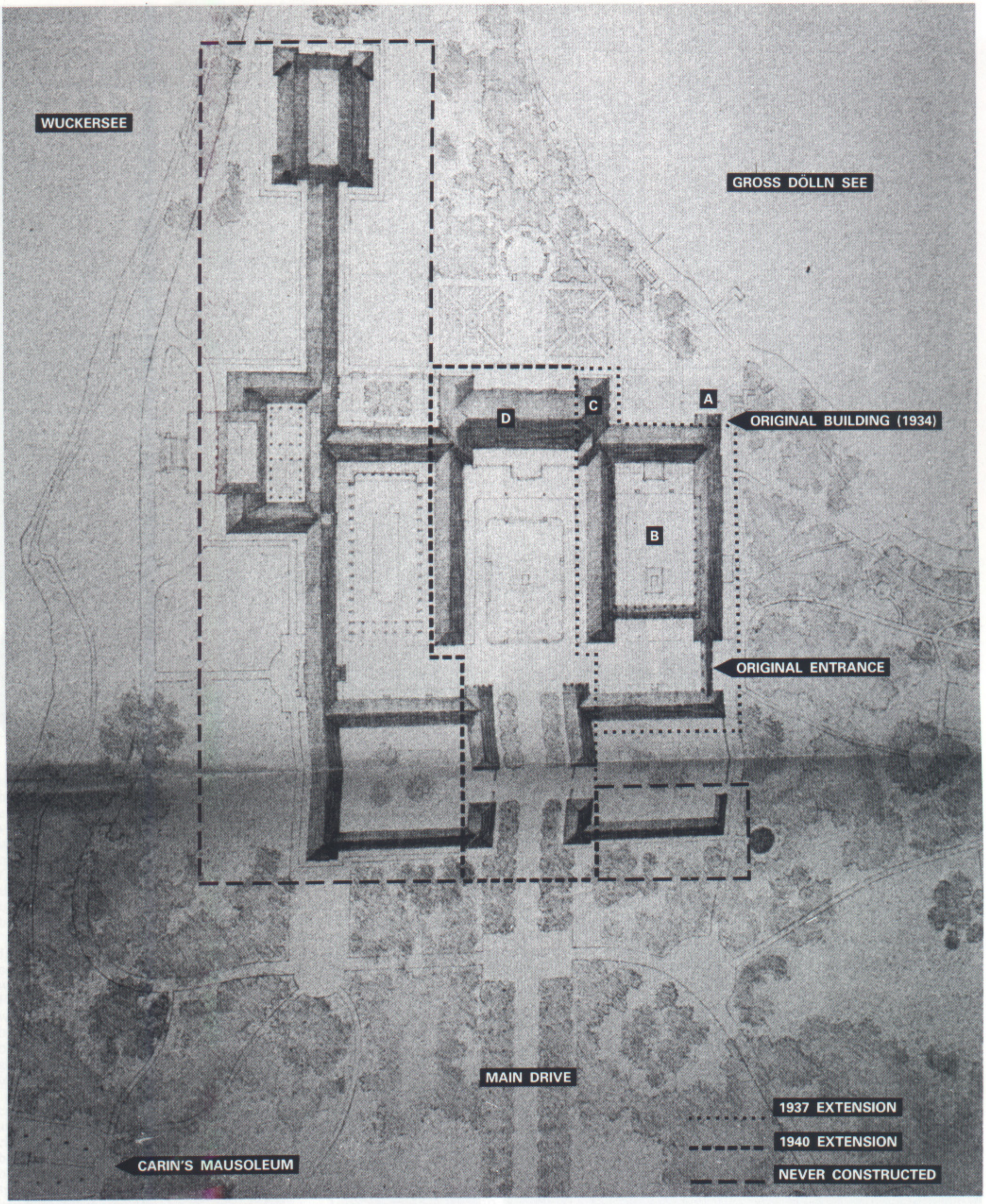
The Schorfheide is a vast rolling forest situated in Mark Brandenburg, some two hours drive north-east of Berlin. The region extends almost 75 miles and its breadth varies from 55 to 60 miles. Between the sheer walls of pine lie beautiful forest and meadowland and numerous small lakes. Oak, spruce, juniper, and fir also populate the area. It was here, on a lonely, isolated heath, that Hermann Göring decided to build his home.

Long before the Nazi seizure of power in January 1933, Göring had dreamed of a comfortable house to which he could retire at weekends to escape the burden of politics. For over two years since the death of his wife, Carin, he had been living in a stylish bachelor's apartment in the busy Charlottenburg section of Berlin. Now with the new government firmly entrenched and a Minister's salary, Göring could fulfill his dream.

As Master of the German forests, he called upon the Prussian State Council to set aside 100,000 acres of land for his use. He chose the Schorfheide because of its natural beauty and proximity to Berlin. From the beginning, the house was to embody the spirit of his dead wife, Carin. The design was inspired by the small hunting lodge of Carin's brother-in-law, Count Eric von Rosen, which lay in the grounds of Rockelstad Castle in Sweden. Although he had a primary conception of the building, Göring consulted Werner March, a government architect in Berlin, to finalise the technical details. In July 1933, he set the builders to work and in ten short months the house was completed. It stood on a steep ridge of hills between two lakes, the large Döllnsee and the Wuckersee where the lofty pine forest was very similar to the landscapes Göring had seen in Sweden and in Poland.

For years many readers have been in touch with your Editor asking what still remained of Hermann Göring's legendary mansion, Carinhall — named in honour of his first wife who had died in 1931 and was later buried there. Göring's estate lay deep in the Schorfheide Forest, some 50 kilometres north of Berlin, and, in post-war years, well inside East Germany. The house lay on the southern shore of the Gross Dölln See but as the Chairman of the State Council of the DDR had official guest houses on the northern shore of the lake, the whole area was designated a 'Sperrgebeit'— a strictly prohibited area. Although it was believed that SS or Soviet forces had blown up the house in 1945, there was no way of establishing exactly what still remained. All that of course changed with the demise of the Berlin Wall, and a visit to Carinhall was promptly retrieved from the back burner. Our visit took place in August 1990 and it was a sign of the times that we now had as our guide an ex-Stasi secret policeman! *Top:* **Here we have arrived in the midst of a cloudburst at the beginning of the drive to the house — the stone sentry boxes with Göring's crest still survive.** *Above:* **The original guardhouse stands nearby.**

CARINHALL
Zehdenick
Joachimsthal
Eberswalde-Finow
Bernau
Schönow
Zerpen-
Basdorf
Borgsdorf
Lehnitz
Zühlsdorf
Oranienburg
Hohenschönhausen
Weißensee
Pankow
Weißensee
Schönfeld
Seefeld
Werneuchen
Wegendorf
Krummensee
Eggersdorf
Neuenhagen
Lindenberg
Blumberg
Wandlitz
Liebenthal
Groß Schönebeck
Eichhorst
Klandorf
Britz
Lichterfelde
Zerpenschleuse
Marienwerder
Ruhlsdorf
Finowfurt
Schmaentenhagen
Stellenhagen
Tuchen-Klobbicke
Biesenthal
Gruntal
Heckelberg
Rüdnitz
Danewitz
Tempelfelde
Beiersdorf
Ladeburg
Schönfeld
Wilmersdorf
Weesow
Hirschfelde
Althüttendorf
Golzow
Verbellin
Hammer
Falkenthal
Zehlendorf
Edmundsthal
Vorgelsang
Friedrichswalde
Wesendorf
Klevelin
Senftenhütte
Eichenwerder
Tegel
Frohnau
Reinickendorf
Pankow
Weißensee
Lichtenberg
Treptow
Köpenick
Spandau
Charlottenburg
Wilmersdorf
Zehlendorf
Steglitz
Tempelhof
Neukölln
Kreuzberg
Wedding
Tiergarten
Mitte
Prenden
Melchow
Lanke
Rüdnitz
Danewitz
Tempelfelde
Ladeburg



Although this plan (by Friedrich Hetzelt and given to Göring on his last birthday in January 1945) shows Carinhall as finally envisaged by 1953, the large southern wing was never constructed. We have not been able to trace an earlier drawing, as this one dates from the wartime period following the second major extension completed by 1940. Those prolific historians of Nazism, Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, writing in 1962, described how 'Carinhall was to become unique among the monuments built by princes and millionaires as expressions of their pride. Hitler, Göring and Goebbels were all amateur architects with marked tastes in building, interior decorating and furnishing which their political success let loose in an orgy of construction. But of all the structures set up during the Nazi régime, Carinhall was the most unusual, a cumulative symbol of its builder's dreams, considerably augmented and enriched over the years. Helped by two young architects, Hetzelt and Tuch of the Department for Architecture in the Prussian State, Göring tried to realise his ambitions, his sentiments, his memories and his vanity in stone, timber, metal, plaster and thatch. He designed every detail himself down to the door handles; he called it his Waldhof, and the result was a monumental curiosity, a kind of ancient German baronial hall equipped with every luxury and combining a massive simplicity with a showmanship of wealth and power. As Gritzback put it: "Hermann Göring conceived the ground plan and the structure on lines that expressed his own strong and self-willed personality".'

First modest beginnings. Work on the small hunting lodge began in July 1933 and the two-storey, split-log building with its thatched roof was completed in ten months. Contrary to some other accounts, no other structure had ever stood on its site. (Its location was at 'A' on the plan *opposite*.)

Carinhall 1934. The design of the building was inspired by a similar hunting lodge which Göring had seen in the grounds of Rockelstad Castle in Sweden. It was there that he had met his future wife, Carin, while operating an air taxi service out of Stockholm in the early 1920s. (US National Archives)

At that time Carinhall was a simple log cabin made of trees felled in the Schorfheide topped by a thatched roof in the typical German style. The main entrance was as simple and unimposing as the rest of the structure. A stone courtyard led to a heavy wooden door carved with the Prussian eagle and Göring's coat-of-arms. The inside of the door was engraved with the following inscription: 'To Minister President Hermann Göring, who protects the honour of Prussia with a strong hand. We dedicate the land on the Wuckersee for your continuous use. May you find the pleasure of nature in Prussia's forest. Berlin, 26 October 1933.'

From the doorway visitors passed through a tiny foyer into a two storey hall (10m by 6m) with a stone fireplace and exposed wooden beams. This room was connected to a smaller dining area (5m by 5m). A kitchen and two closets completed the ground floor plan.

The upstairs consisted of Göring's study with a balcony which allowed him to work in the open air and look out over the Döllnsee. It was furnished with a large writing desk and a great tiled stove. There was also an open fireplace built in the old Swedish/East Prussian style. This room also served as a shrine for Carin. Small items which had once belonged to her were displayed everywhere. On the wall hung a life-size painting of Carin before which a candle always burned. It showed the beautiful Swede seated in a meadow with the Bavarian Alps rising in the background. Attached to this study was a small sleeping niche for Göring himself.

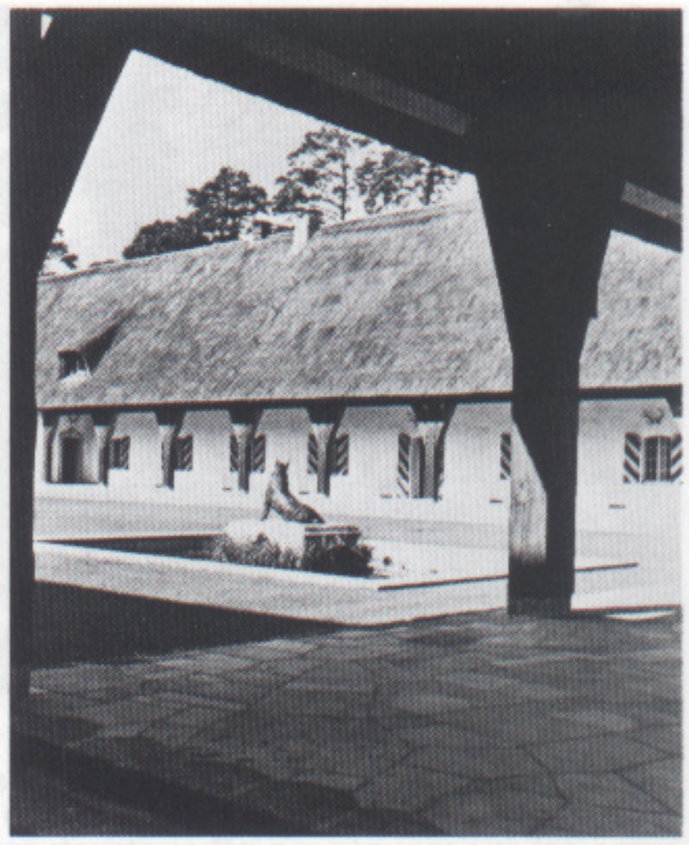
In addition to this room, there were two guest bedrooms and a bath. It was indeed intended as a weekend house, a place for Göring and his guests to hunt and relax. The interior was tastefully furnished but not extravagantly. Göring had chosen large handmade furniture of clean and classic lines. There were no old masters or Gobelins hanging from the walls. Instead, scenes of nature filled the rooms along with the mounted animal heads which he himself had shot.

Under Göring's patronage the Schorfheide also became a wildlife preserve for rare species of animals. He imported elks from Canada, bison, falcons, and types of wild horse. Scientists were successful in acclimatising these creatures to the surrounding forest and it was here that he spent every moment of his free time.

However, Carinhall was not to retain its status as a weekend retreat or a small hunting lodge. In 1935, Hermann Göring remarried. His new wife, Emmy Sonnemann, was a former actress at the Prussian State Theatre in Berlin. She was installed as

The main hall of the first building where heavy Gothic furniture and hunting trophies reflected the personality of its owner.

December 11, 1936. Göring and guests inspect the progress of the first major rebuild which was eventually to transform a weekend retreat into a state palace.



The 1937 extension created an imposing new courtyard ('B' on plan) complete with lily pond. Guest rooms lay in the right-hand wing.

hostess and he added several new rooms and enlarged the hall. By now they were entertaining heads of state as well as royal visitors in the Schorfheide. Carinhall had become Göring's unofficial residence.

In 1936 Hitler gave the order that Carinhall be rebuilt on a grand scale befitting his idea of the new German Reich. At this time it ceased to be a private home and it was, at Göring's insistence, deeded to the State. Little by little, a backdrop was descending. More and more the house was beginning to symbolise the dreams and accomplishments of its master and as Göring's riches and titles grew, so did Carinhall.

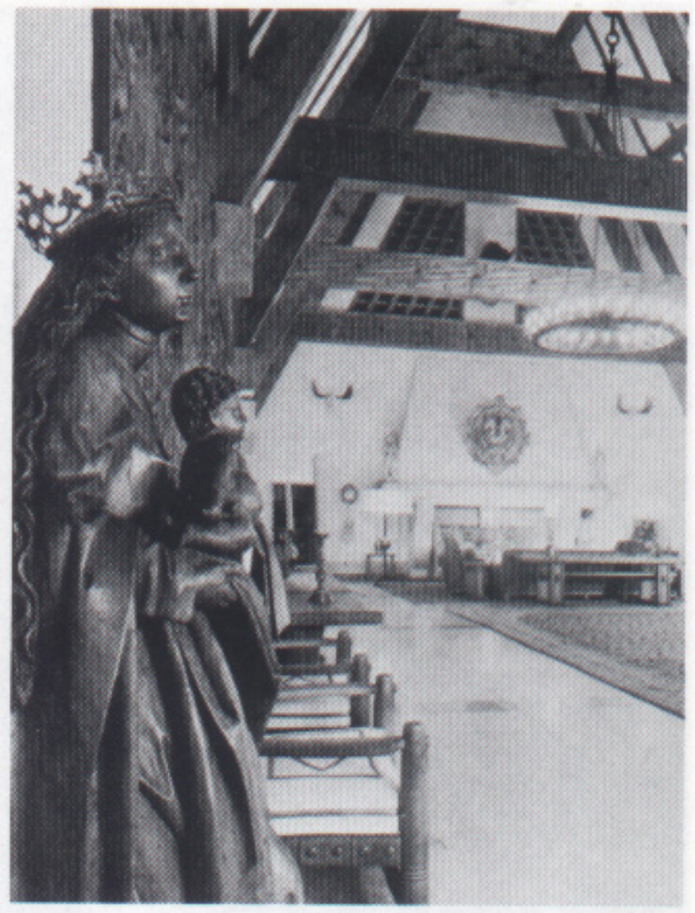
On December 11, 1936, Göring gathered with the workmen in the unfinished courtyard and inspected their progress. Construction had been underway for several months and he was pleased with the advancements. He paraded the workers, shook hands with each of them, and handed out cigars in leather cases specially stamped: 'RICHTEFEST CARINHALL 1936 IN DANKBARKEIT HERMANN GÖRING'.

The topping out ceremony took place on July 20, 1937 when the new Carinhall was officially unveiled. It was no longer a simple hunting lodge but an enormous forest mansion. The complex consisted of a long two-storey building flanked by two wings. Perhaps only Erich Gritzbach, Göring's official biographer, can do justice with his description of the house:

'An unforgettably beautiful avenue between rows of ancient trees leads to a great inner court, around which the lofty main building and its wings are arranged. An ambulatory, supported by powerful oaken beams, encircles the imposing courtyard. Ancient portals of great magnificence, mementoes from a southern climate, have been built in as gateways, and their artistic beauty only emphasises the severe simplicity of the setting. The roof of the house itself as well as of the lodge is of rushes, and blends more harmoniously with the landscape than one of slates or tiles. Magnificent masonry of squared granite blocks of different colours and wonderful metalwork greet the eye on the first approach to the building. The whole structure has the stamp of restraint and simplicity, despite the fact that it is built of the best and most costly materials.'

The original building was not sacrificed but incorporated into the new design. The rustic hall had been supplanted by an enormous room where Göring displayed his treasures and entertained his guests. Everywhere, the house was surrounded by elaborate gardens, flower beds, and life-size bronze statues of animals. Each window

Hermann with his second wife, Emmy, outside the new main entrance of Carinhall on July 20, 1937 when the new extension was unveiled. Emmy always had to live in the shadow of Carin's memory, made even more all-pervading by the presence of the other woman's mortal remains permanently lying in state within the grounds.



Although the modest hunting lodge was incorporated into the rebuild, the replacement for the old, rustic hall was this 'Great Hall' ('C' on plan). When Carinhall was extended again three years later, this room then became Göring's study.

provided a magnificent view of the lakes or the forest.

Göring and his wife lived in the long, central building. The left wing consisted of a music room and a resplendent library with richly bound volumes on any topic. It also contained an enormous gymnasium and indoor swimming-pool and it was here that Göring attempted to shed his tremendous weight. He often swam laps with his wife or valet, Robert Kropp, and used the latest exercise machines.

The right wing had been designed with guest rooms, a lounge, a kitchen, and the servants' quarters. It may also be said that Göring was a model employer and he demanded that the lodgings for his servants be equipped with every comfort and convenience.

Inside the new Carinhall the rooms were furnished in a luxurious style with the finest materials available. The floors were made of polished marble and covered with expensive rugs. Paintings by Cranach and Rubens hung from the walls, sometimes in three or four tiers! Göring's study was furnished in grand style. Visitors approached a massive desk with its high-backed chair resembling a throne. Enormous candelabras stood on each side illuminating the faces of Carin and Hitler in silver frames. Gobelins adorned the walls.

The dining room was also designed on an elaborate scale. The room itself measured 25m × 10m and the table could seat forty persons at one sitting. The room's real attraction, however, was one of the world's largest picture windows measuring 10m by 5m! Like the one at Hitler's Berghof on the Obersalzberg, it too could be lowered into the floor at the push of a button.

Göring's private suite was located on the first floor of the central building overlooking the shores of the Döllnsee. His quarters held a massive bed with a full canopy. Ensconced on the wall above his pillows was a life-size nude by Cranach representing *Europa*. A sliding wooden door separated his room from Emmy's apartment.

The basement at Carinhall contained a large cinema, a bowling alley, and an old-fashioned Bavarian beer hall. Göring had chosen the attic to display his model railway where he sat at the controls in a comfortable red leather armchair and heads of state, including Mussolini, the Duke of Windsor, and Matsuoka, were interested spectators during their visits to the mansion.

After the birth of Göring's daughter, Edda, in 1938, he decided to enlarge Carinhall yet again and he instructed his architects to draw up plans which would double the size of the existing structure. And so they did. The builders went to work with lightning speed and by 1940 there was another courtyard, another wing, and another building which dwarfed the last. The thatched roof was also replaced with tiles due to the potential fire hazard. From this time on it is difficult for the writer to describe Carinhall; indeed Göring himself told his guests that they needed fourteen days to see all of the house!

In July 1940, Hitler promoted Göring to Reichsmarschall of the Greater German Reich. With this rank, he reached the pinnacle of his career and popularity. The elegant garden parties and diplomatic receptions at Carinhall were in full swing. The front was far away. The war had been 'won' and the Göring household was living in a gilded cage, cut off from reality. Later when the tide began to turn against Germany, he sought refuge in Carinhall. Instead of visiting the front or the bombed-out cities, the commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe could be found hunting deer in the Schorfheide.

After the defeat at Stalingrad, Göring made Carinhall the official headquarters of the Luftwaffe and it was here that the generals and their adjutants came for military conferences. At this time he also had an elaborate network of bunkers installed under the house. These tunnel shelters were luxuriously furnished to match the style of the above ground rooms. The outside buildings were also covered with camouflage to avoid detection. In spite of the heavy air raids on and around Berlin, Carinhall was never a target for the Allied air forces and it sustained no damage due to war operations.

On January 12, 1945, the Reichsmarschall celebrated his last birthday at Carinhall. It was a sumptuous affair and the last of its kind to be held there. Great hoards of presents were brought out from Berlin with the remaining supply of petrol. They were displayed on tables in the great hall as in years past. Among the expensive gifts were an architect's plans to once again double the size of the house. The new additions were to include a public art gallery and a railway to bring visitors from all over Germany. Yet as Göring moved among his guests, he must have known that these ambitions would never be realised. Indeed, the Russians were nearing Berlin at a fearsome pace and he would be lucky to remain in Carinhall for another three months.

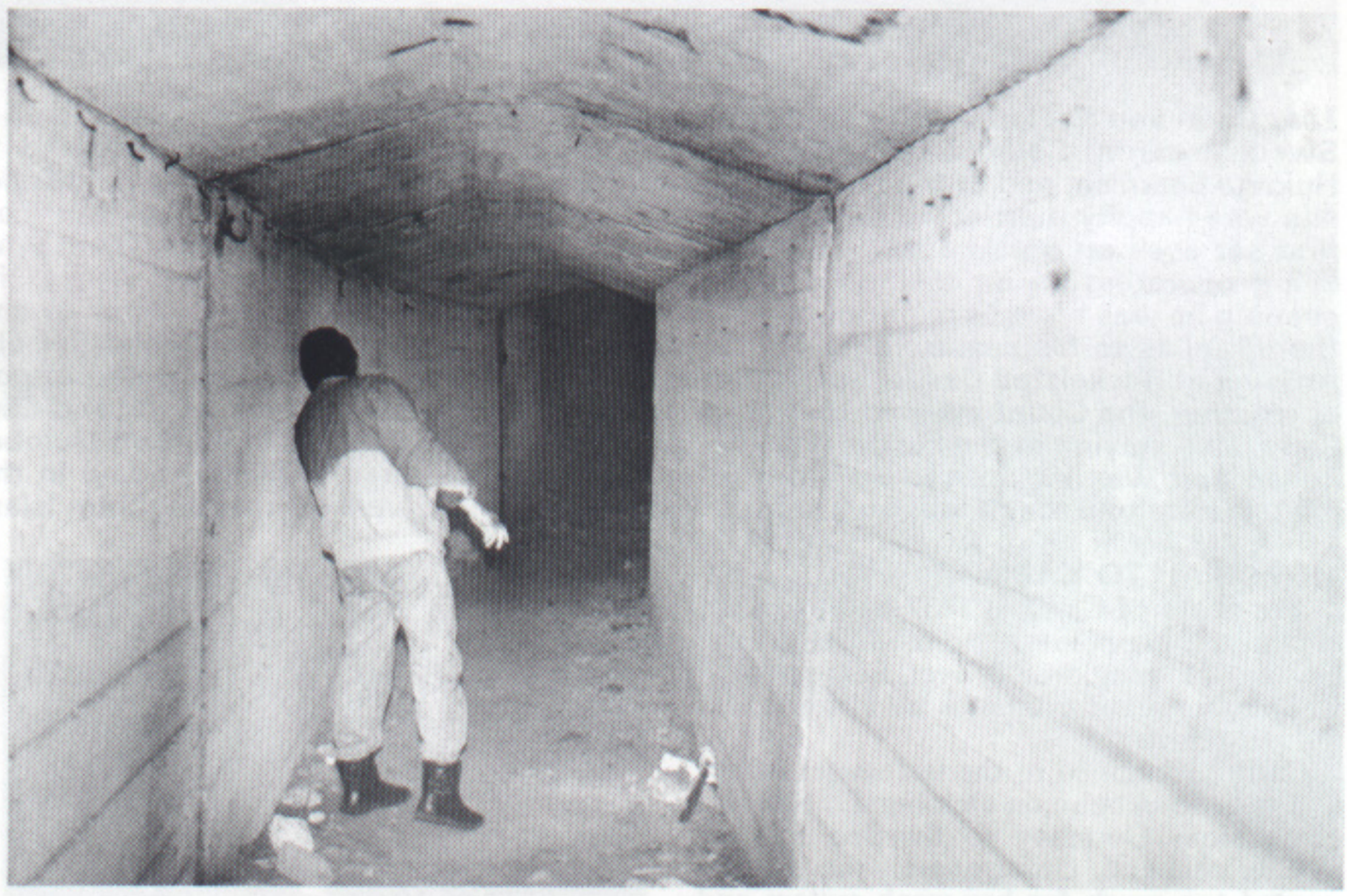
When extended a second time in 1940, this sumptuous Galerie was added ('D' on plan) leading from the former Great Hall. The picture was taken on March 29, 1941 when Göring received the Japanese Foreign Minister, Yosuke Matsuoka (executed by the Allies in 1946) at Carinhall.

At the end of January, special trains began to transport the art treasures and valuable furniture to Berchtesgaden. Little by little the rooms were emptied of the paintings and statues which had found their way to Carinhall from the famous galleries of Europe. Emmy, Edda, and a few members of the household staff also decamped to the Obersalzberg in Bavaria. As the Red Army moved further into Germany and the military situation worsened, Göring found much needed solace in his beloved forest mansion. He rarely attended the conferences in Hitler's bunker; it was too late and he knew it.

Finally on April 20, 1945, Göring decided it was no longer safe to remain in the Schorfheide. Hitler had suddenly called away the troops guarding Carinhall to man the defences in Berlin and it was only too apparent that time was running out. The remaining personal items were packed and the final trucks began their long trek towards southern Germany. For the last time, Göring stood beneath the stately portico and said his farewells to the people who had come to see him off. He shook hands with his former staff and exchanged salutes with the officers. Then he walked into the park and took a last look at the vast estate. He must have reflected on the happy years he had spent there. Now everything was lost. It was a very bitter moment for Hermann Göring. Finally, he stepped into the waiting car and passed through the long avenue of trees forever.

But Göring and his entourage were not the last to leave Carinhall. Immediately after their departure, members of Göring's armoured division began to mine the house with explosives. Nothing was to be left behind and nothing left standing. The electricity and heating had already been disconnected and for two hours the curious soldiers wandered through the empty rooms of the mansion. Next day, having set the charges, they carried out Göring's order and the entire complex was demolished. Within hours, the Red Army swept through the area on their way to Berlin. They found only smoking ruins, unaware of the ghosts who would remain at Carinhall long after the others had taken their leave.

The ruins of Carinhall were pictured *(opposite)* by an unknown photographer with the *Berliner Zeitung* soon after the war. The stone was carted away utilised for other buildings in the area and the statuary either looted or thrown in the lake. Later, the NVA (the East German Army) completely cleared the area and replanted clumps of conifers across the site. Nevertheless, pieces of smashed stonework, lumps of concrete, broken tiles and rusted ironwork can still be found in the undergrowth. Our guide at this point was Herr Albert Krause, the local policeman, and also the son of the man who had worked installing the heating system in Carinhall. His intimate knowledge of the area, both official and unofficial. before, during and after the war, may well be unique and, in the light of the new-found freedom of speech in eastern Germany, we asked him outright what would have happened if he had caught us there in former times. He told us that his orders were to report immediately all Allied military vehicles and/or personnel, but there would have been nothing to stop us, as civilians, walking to the site; that is, of course, if we could have found it without his help!



A short section of the air raid shelter still remains and can be entered through a narrow opening. Our ex-Stasi man leads the way.

Herr Krause told us that just two weeks prior to our visit, local police divers had recovered four statues from the lake, which were subsequently taken to the Institut für Denkmalschutz in Berlin. The police grappling iron still lay on the foreshore where once Göring's boathouses stood. Nearby lay a Tellermine, possibly left over from the 1945 demolitions.

Left: **Carin von Kantzow, circa 1912. She was the daughter of a Swedish baron, Colonel Carl Fock, and his Anglo-Irish wife, Huldine Beamish, and at the time this painting was completed, she was happily married to Kapten Nils von Kantzow. Göring first set eyes on her in 1920 when he was trying to earn his living operating an air taxi service in Sweden. One winter's evening he was hired to pilot Count von Rosen from Stockholm the 50 miles to his castle home on the shore of Lake Båven. Arriving at Rockelstad Castle, having flown through the foulest of weather, the Count insisted that his pilot stop for the night. Carin, also staying at the castle, was the sister of Countess von Rosen and was introduced to the young, dashing ex-fighter pilot. We are told that it was love at first sight — certainly it was a romance with all the flavour of Tristan and Isolde. Carin soon left her husband for Göring and lived openly with him in Stockholm until they moved to Munich, where they were later married — on February 3, 1923. During the years which followed, Carin was the rock of support for Göring in his rise with the Nazis: from his being grievously wounded nine months later in the putsch (see *After the Battle* No. 66) to enthusiastically helping him become Hitler's right-hand man on the long road to power. However, the strain and stress of it all took its toll and Carin was the victim. Laid low by tuberculosis, she died on October 17, 1931, and was buried four days later (her birthday) in the family plot *right*, in Lovö Churchyard on Drottningholm Island, just west of Stockholm.**

MEMORIAL TO CARIN

The death of Carin in 1931 had been the central turning point in the life of Hermann Göring. Nothing would ever be the same without her and for months his cheerfulness did not return.

Carin succumbed to the last stages of her illness in Stockholm on October 17. She had come from Germany to Sweden for her mother's funeral. Unfortunately the journey proved too much for her weak system and the result was a severe setback in her own condition. Göring, who had accompanied his wife some weeks earlier, was not at her bedside during the final hours. At her request he was in Germany pursuing politics. However, as soon as the news reached Berlin he returned to Stockholm immediately. He found his beloved wife lying at rest in the Edelweiss Chapel behind her parent's house. Lily, Carin's favourite sister, had to break the sad news to Göring. He became quite wild with despair, throwing himself over the coffin, weeping and screaming.

Several days later Carin was interred in the Fock family plot at Lovö Churchyard on the small island of Drottningholm. Here she would rest with the remains of her ancestors until Göring could put down more permanent roots.

Göring returned to Sweden in the summer of 1933 to attend the wedding of Carin's niece, Birgitta von Rosen, at Rockelstad Castle. A few days later he slipped away to visit Carin's grave. He placed a huge wreath of red roses in the shape of a swastika on the stone marker and ordered a flower shop to place a similar one there every now and then. However, the event was publicised and the wreath removed by anti-Nazis. In its place they left a message: 'Sweden is offended by the use of a grave for propaganda. Let the dead rest in peace'. Göring was devastated and it was this incident that gave him the impulse of building Carinhall.

Göring visits Lovö Churchyard in the summer of 1933 to place a wreath on Carin's grave. Because the floral tribute was shaped like a swastika, he was sharply criticised by the influential newspaper, *Svenska Dagbladet* the following day. Swedish anti-Nazis then replaced the wreath with a notice of their own.

And so in 1933 the builders also began work on a mausoleum for Carin. It was located in a small forest clearing on the shores of the Wuckersee. Here she would find real peace and he could visit his dead wife whenever he wished.

The tomb was situated directly across from the house on a slope inclining toward the Wuckersee. Giant menhirs of red granite lined the path leading to the grave. Inscribed on one of the tall stones was Göring's coat-of-arms, into another, Carin's. The underground mausoleum was reached by a long flight of stone steps. At the bottom two bronze doors, emblazoned with stylised swastikas, opened to reveal the vaulted chamber where Carin's body would lie in state. Light streamed through a small blue window which could also be tilted to permit a view of the lake. Candles burned on each side of the tiled wall.

Göring had meanwhile approached the firm of Svensk Tenn in Stockholm to construct an enormous pewter sarcophagus for Carin's remains. He requested the measurements to be 2.5m long × 1.5m wide, the size calculated so that his own body could be included one day. The design was made by the Swedish architect, Uno Åhrén, and the

Göring was furious at the insult and, although the Swedish government expressed their regrets, and friends replaced the flowers, he made a resolve to bring Carin's body to Germany, safe from further desecration. Carinhall was already a shrine to his beloved wife's memory — now it would also become her final resting place. *Left:* **An underground tomb was excavated on the high ground overlooking the smaller of the two lakes, the Wuckersee (see plan page 44).** *Right:* **Eight massive red boulders like prehistoric menhirs, some individually inscribed, were set up surrounding the clearing. This is the mailed fist of Göring's own coat of arms. All was now ready to receive Carin's mortal remains.**

only ornaments were the gilded arms of the Fock and Göring families and the simple inscription: CARIN GÖRING.

On June 19, 1934, Carin's coffin was put into the pewter sarcophagus which was welded together by artisans from Svensk Tenn dressed in tails for the occasion. It was taken from the peaceful churchyard at Lovö, draped with a swastika flag, and put aboard a ferry bound for Sassnitz. Göring and his stepson, Thomas von Kantzow, were waiting on the dock when the boat arrived the following day.

Next day the sarcophagus was transported by rail from Sassnitz to Eberswalde. Here Göring and Kantzow were joined by Carin's sisters, Count von Rosen, the zu Wieds, and Prince August-Wilhelm. Each of them stood silent and alone with their thoughts as the train drew into the platform. As the spectators raised their arms in the Nazi salute, the pewter coffin was unloaded and placed on a flat bed truck for its journey to the Schorfheide. There it was transferred to a horse-drawn carriage. Carin's eldest sister, Fanny von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, described the scene in her book:

'On all sides were black obelisks with sacrificial flames burning with a group of musicians playing. The riders were sitting bolt upright and silent on their horses. Little old women in a highly emotional state were offering flowers. School children were gazing with astonished eyes at Hermann Göring, at last able to bring his dead wife home. The vehicles slowly made their way through long lines of people to the Schorfheide. In all the villages the church bells were ringing, with such a strong current of warmth pouring out to meet the participants that this journey would never be forgotten.'

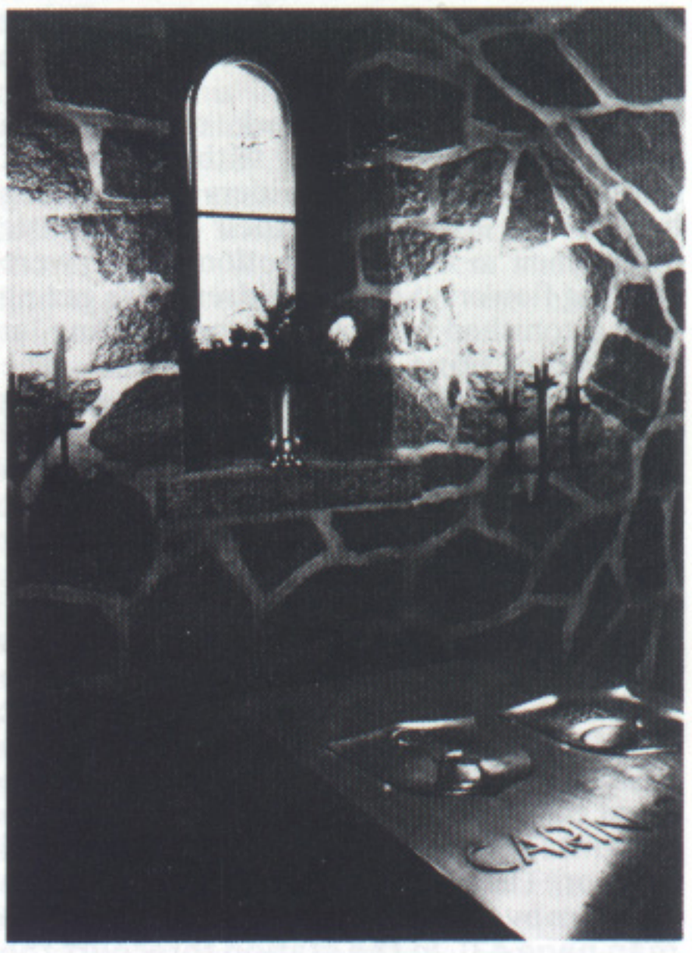
On June 19, 1934, Carin's coffin was removed from its grave at Lovö in the presence of her three sisters and Count von Rosen. It was moved by rail to the small port of Trelleborg at the southern-most tip of Sweden, then taken by ferry to Sassnitz where it was met by Göring and her son Thomas. *Centre:* **From there the coffin moved by train to Eberswalde (see map page 43). In the station forecourt the cortege formed up for the final 30-kilo-metre drive to Carinhall.** *Right:* **A plaque on the station now recalls its rôle in the right-wing Klapp Putsch uprising of March 1920.**

June 20 at Carinhall — at this time of course still the original wooden lodge. Among the group of mourners was Prinz August-Wilhelm (the Kaiser's son and Queen Victoria's great grandson), though the photographer focused on the big names.

Fifty-six years later we set out in their footsteps, but this time there were no lines of Party members to greet us; no military band, and no Siegfried's funeral march from *Götterdämmerung* to get us in the right mood.

As the party assembled at the edge of the clearing, Carin's sarcophagus was brought forward. The dramatic silence was broken by the strains of Wagner's funeral music and a short service ensued. Finally, Göring and Hitler came forward to pay their respects to the noble Swede. Fanny concludes: 'After the guests had left, and Carin's coffin had been carried into the vault, Hermann Göring personally arranged every wreath, every bouquet and every flower which had been brought there for his wife. The cloudless sky was blue and peaceful, with the stars gleaming above us. The lonely husband had brought home his most sacred one at last.'

Right: **Hitler and Göring led the procession to the grave. His enormous wreath of red roses bore a sash with the words: 'In constant love and loyalty and sincerest gratitude. Hermann'. Hitler, too, was fond of Carin as she had been an ardent supporter of the Party since the earliest days, and had influenced her husband to join. Her early death prevented her from enjoying their success.** *Below:* **Every detail was planned by Göring personally, the massive sarcophagus providing for his own body one day.**



Carin's eldest sister described the scene: 'Lovely as in a fairy story is this peaceful spot in the German forest, and one felt that spirits from ancient times were watching from above. Stone steps led down to the vault, and the light from a small deep-blue coloured window fell upon the tiled walls. Through the window there was a glimpse of edelweiss growing by the lake. Above in the earth lay the same gravestone which had once been at Lovö and Swedish soil surrounded it; beyond were the loveliest flowers. When Carin's sarcophagus was brought into the open place muffled drums sounded a tattoo.'

Right: **Contrary to what some observers have written that the last act, after the house had been demolished, was that the SS blew up the tomb, this picture from the archives of the *Berliner Zeitung* proves otherwise as it is believed to date from 1946. Some people in Joachimsthal, the nearest large town, say that the sarcophagus was cut open and rings stolen from Carin's fingers before her remains were recovered and despatched to Sweden by a priest, Heribert Jansson, in November 1950.**

Yes, Carin had come home again but unfortunately for her, it was not to be the eternal slumber taken for granted by those gathered in the Schorfheide that June day.

Her rest was to last almost eleven years before it was rudely interrupted by the sound of Soviet mortar shells. It is uncertain why Göring decided to leave her remains in the underground mausoleum after his final departure in 1945 as he must have known that the Soviets would certainly desecrate the tomb. In any case, his plans for the destruction of Carinhall did not include the grave.

The arriving Soviet troops were at first spooked by the eerie silence pervading the atmosphere around the burial place. It is not known exactly what happened in the days that followed but according to local rumour, the sarcophagus was broken into by soldiers in a search for jewels and other valuables.

In November 1950, a Swedish priest in Berlin heard what had happened to Carinhall. Somehow he made his way to the Schorfheide and found Carin's skeleton scattered on the tiled floor of the mausoleum. Since the soldiers' departure the local people had been too superstitious to approach the area. The priest put Carin's remains into a potato sack and sent them back to her family in Sweden under her maiden name.

And so, as the sun mounted high over the thick German forest, Carin made her last journey across the wide plains of Prussia, over the Baltic Sea, to rest once more in the churchyard at Lovö. This time there was no one draped in mourning to see her off. There was no band to play the funeral hymns of Wagner and no pewter sarcophagus. Carin Göring made the final voyage alone.

Certainly at some later stage the mausoleum was blown up, most probably by the NVA . This is how we found the spot in August 1990. (See also back cover.)

Left: **However, someone stole a march on the East Germans. Before its destruction, the doors to the tomb were removed by hands unknown, eventually finding their way to the West German auction house of Hermann Historica. They were sold at a sale in Munich in May 1990 for DM 25,000. So what now remains? Only the top two steps can be seen of the stairway and little of the stonework survives. It appears that explosive charges were placed on the menhirs as we found fragments scattered over a wide area.** *Above:* **This impressive chunk remained in the undergrowth.**

CARIN GÖRING
f. FOCK
* 21·10·1888
† 17·10·1931